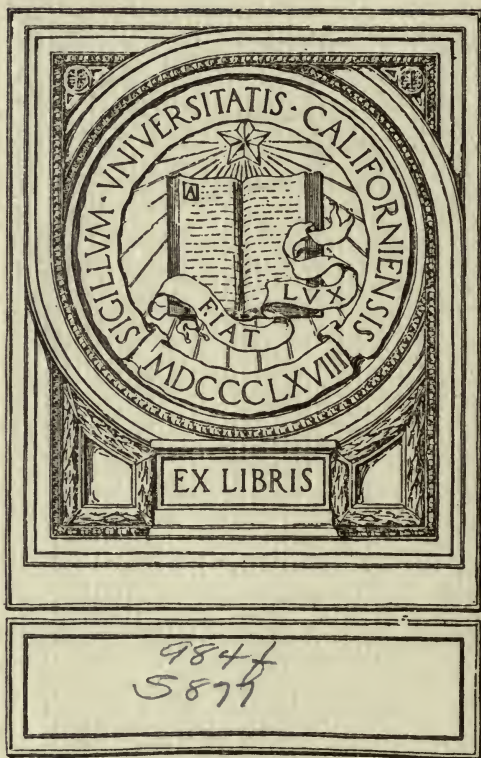


Battery B
thru the
Fires of France

Ernest Stone





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Ernest Stone

BATTERY B

Thru the Fires of France

*Being a very human and intimate
sketch of a few men who served
stem a tiny eddy in one of the great-
est of cataclysms—the World War*

1919

BY
ERNEST STONE

Battery B. Second Battalion
Anti-Aircraft Artillery, C.A.C.

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FOREWORD

In this great moment of peace and lawn parties, good fellowship and woman's presence; of wakeless nights and a bountiful table—a paradise—it is difficult to recall the days spent in France under arms, much less the actual "call of the cannon."

As I sit in my studio gazing out over green stretches, blossoming trees and buzzing bees, I am tempted to ascend into that state of mental bliss, sequel to a midsummer's dream, and romp with ethereal children.

Yet, thru the pages of this book I return to the past with a keen sense of enjoyment, nor would I forfeit one iota of experience gained "over there." I recall Battery B with a smile; the farewell, the ocean voyage, France, the Front and the roar of a million cannon.

The whole panoramic picture unfolds in a flash then disappears with but a trace fluttering in the wind. The incidents are personal, but the pictures are of stuff such as a million Yanks touched in that march towards Berlin. Thus can one share, if the reader but transpose the proper nouns. There were a thousand Corporal Blankys, and Captain Ironhand's shadow stalked in every quarter of the camp. How familiar old Paris and that letter the French maiden wrote; the cannon's roar and the army beans which contained an equal number of pebbles per pan.

Captain Ironhand and Corporal Blanky are *nom de plumes*. All other characters are properly named and true to life. Members of Battery B will readily recognize the "plumes" and perhaps will recall a bitter taste. I make no apologies; I have stated the facts.

This little book is my humble contribution to that memorable epoch of our globe's history—1914-1918. It is intended for boys who have made the journey. Others may linger over the written words and perchance catch a glimpse of the real, but how well we realize that actual experience is the master key to all symbolic code.

Ernest Stone

Hollywood, California.

Summer 1919.

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BATTERY B
thru
The Fires of France

CHAPTER I.

PROLOGUE

Our transport the Amerika, a pre-war German liner, departed from its mooring on the tenth day of June, nineteen eighteen. Seven thousand troops were aboard and a happier, more venturesome lot of lads I have seldom seen. Their quest was not a selfish one—for personal pleasures or gold—but an entry into the Great Adventure, and their better natures fairly shone in the afternoon sun.

There were few persons about the wharf, chiefly stevedores and sailors bent on their daily tasks, and the usual sea of handkerchiefs and shouting was sadly not in evidence. This was a stern business—a war-business—and being of this nature the troops were being shipped by the thousands, yes hundreds of thousands, every month from dozens of handkerchiefless wharfs systematically, secretly, and at each sailing the public was not aware of the departure.

Uncle Sam could ill-afford to have his secrets known to the enemy. Yonder across the sea lay submarines, wolves of the ocean, ready to swoop down upon their prey. The Lusitania had sailed gloriously into the Great Beyond and the sacrifice was great, but the lesson was indelibly stamped upon the National Consciousness of Free America. This lesson and the pirates of the sea were prime factors in Uncle Sam taking every precaution to

CHAPTER 2

FAREWELL

It was on the 31st day of May, 1918, that our troop-train departed from the station at San Diego, California. On this day my sweet wife stood amid a crowd of townsfolk leaning on her father's arm. Battery B stood in rank upon the station platform after having executed a "squads left" and "Battery halt." At the command of "rest" each soldier was permitted to see his loved ones once more—perhaps for the last time.

Mrs. Stone rushed over to my side and, strange as it may seem, not a tear did I discover. Ah! brave girl, but I knew the heartache that was here and she could see the struggle that I was making. Just before arriving at the station my little girl had purchased a full bag of fruits and nuts and a couple of magazines. These she gave me and a kiss for good measure.

Other sweethearts were among the ranks, too; wives and mothers, and the same heart-burning was theirs I know. Fathers were saying farewell to their sons and their hand-shakes were firm, but mothers, wives and sweethearts gave tender hugs and kisses as their tokens of farewell.

Five minutes later the Battery was ordered aboard but luckily we did not start for some minutes. Mrs. Stone came aboard and we sat together upon a comfortable leather sofa in the closed com-

partment of our car. In those precious moments we made anew our pledges, and the love and understanding that passed between us was sufficient to urge one to brave the gates of hell, even. Yes, to the end of time would she be true.

Orders came to clear the cars—a last embrace—and a few seconds later I was at the side window. Once more we held hands. I made an effort to reach down for an extra kiss. The lad at the next window was doing likewise and all up and down the platform were sweethearts reaching up and lovers reaching down. A sea of waving handkerchiefs and shouting and—the whistle! We were moving!

“Goodbye, goodbye” is heard from all sides. It was then that the fountain of tears o’erflowed; the dear girl had held on desperately, but now, now I was actually being carried away. Soon I would be lost in the hazy distance, perhaps to be gone for many years. At this juncture tears as large as apples began to flood my eyes and my heart throbbed—and would I ever, ever see her, my darling wife, again? The parting kisses, parting words and growing distance were revolving in my dazed mind.

Father Time waits for no man. That day we embarked upon a new journey.

Twenty-eight days later “somewhere in France” I received my wife’s first letter: “It is early and the beginning of a new month (June 1). We both stand at the threshold of a new life to which we must adjust ourselves. Shall we falter? * * * * I

have not cried one tiny tear. What have I to weep about? * * * * This is my 'front-line trench' and I am ready. * * * *"

CHAPTER 3

JOURNEY OVERLAND

Our route carried us over the Salt Lake Line, through the Mojave desert, across the border and into Nevada. For the purpose of concealing troop movements we traveled over branch roads, skirted large cities and stopped at odd places.

Our first stop was Las Vegas, Nevada, and at this small village we quit the train to take our first exercise.

The Battalion traveled in two sections; 3 companies in one, 2 in the other, including the medical staff, numbering 520 enlisted men and 15 officers in all. Each section trailed an extra baggage car which was used for a kitchen.

Our mess was carried out along efficient lines, to the sorrow of our porter. We received two cooked meals and one lunch per day. Breakfast consisted of rice, usually, or a cereal, bread, butter and coffee; and on one occasion, biscuits. We were always ready at meal time. Those who happened to be asleep or interested otherwise soon were awakened from their reveries for there would descend upon their heads a noise such as one hears on New Year's Eve; clanking of mess-tins, shouting and a general up-roar.

The K. P.s (kitchen police) would juggle an infant tub, filled with "chow" down the aisle of the moving train and in dishing out to the waiting mess-pans would not always find the mark. Our

colored porter had his sweet time, you bet, though he was good-natured and later the boys fully paid him for his labors. His gratitude grew and grew and his affection was good to see.

After performing a few acrobatic feats with our mess-tins placed upon our knees or on the window-sills, or on the red-floor, we retired to the vestibule to wash our "dishes." The refuse can was a poor excuse, for many times the garbage would be scattered upon the platform. The buckets containing hot water, supposedly, usually contained cold water. However we managed and after each meal the garbage and the extra water, splashed upon the vestibule platform, found a path into the corridor and even into the toilet compartment. This state of affairs was not improved and the porter of our car patiently cleaned up after each meal through the entire trip.

To remain clean was an impossibility and the stock of fresh towels was quickly exhausted. The men evidently preferred to economize in water for our towels were soon made black.

Considering the equipment each soldier carried and the general untidiness usually prevalent among a group of men (there are always a few who are slouchy and careless) the interior of our Pullman sleeper presented a comical sight, indeed. I have had occasion to travel in Pullmans in civil life and know what the general appearance and comforts are. The contrast was decided. From the ceiling to the spaces beneath the seats every possible inch was discovered and filled. Back-carriers, hats, coats and what-not were tied to the overhanging chande-

liers. Bed hammocks were exposed after the berths were made up and these nets could expand and expand until an enormous amount of truck could be stowed away.

In our car there happened to be a reddish powder upon the floor (for what purpose I could not discover) and of course everything pushed under our seats received a good coating of red. The dust poured in through the open windows during travel (soldiers are not accustomed to closed circumstances) and particles of food answered Newton's law; this and the red dust and white dust, combined, made us a pretty dirty, grimy outfit.

CHAPTER 4

CORPORAL BLANKY

One member of our Battery was a rustler, a regular East-end Izy Kazat. This corporal Blanky would get permission from the Commanding Officer to run up-town whenever we stopped along the road and stock up with fruit, nuts, candy, cigarettes and cigars. During the first two days he did an ordinary fruit-stand business, but each day became more daring and speculative until about the fourth day out he was conducting a department store. Yes sir, you could buy handkerchiefs, towels, shoestrings, magazines and books.

Blanky had arranged a temporary counter over two seats and any hour of the day you could find him sitting supremely on top of the world, with a cigar in the corner of his mouth and hat cocked, dispensing his wares.

It was a war-department order that no man leave the trains without permission from the Commanding Officer. Blanky held the monopoly. But it was well for it centralized the business and, while we were all supplied with "eats" at a fair price, at the same time it gave Blanky a profit for his services.

About 6:30 p. m. the second day we reached the state of Utah and later at Provo we changed over to the Denver-Rio Grand. On the desert it was hot, here it was cold. We passed through Grand

Junction, Colorado, at 4 p. m. and that night at twelve we ascended to 10,000 feet above sea-level and crossed the Great Divide at Tennessee Pass.

It was my turn at guard on this occasion and while the Battery was tucked away in sleep I stepped out into the rigid night air and filled my lungs to overflowing with the pine-scented mountain ozone. I breathed deep and long and was reminded of the ever growing distance between the loved One at home and myself. The Rockies presented the first great physical barrier between us, I thought.

Descending the eastern watershed was a simple task for our modern giant locomotive. Just at dawn we entered the Royal Gorge. In all the world, perhaps, there is not a more picturesque spot. The canyon was appropriately named for it is truly Royal.

We followed the river in and out through the stately Gorge and at five in the morning reached Pueblo, the city of my birth. As my parents deserted Pueblo for country more mountainous in nature while I was still of tender age I did not remember the city. When I discovered the huge banks of smoke overhanging the city I was glad that my parents had changed their abode.

At Pueblo we switched over to the Missouri-Pacific, reaching the state of Kansas at 11:30 the same day (June 3). Switching from one line to another was in name only and we retained the original coaches of our through-train during the entire journey.

CHAPTER 5

SEDALIA

About noon the fourth day we passed through the small town of Sedalia, Missouri. Here we received a royal reception. Red Cross girls and workers were on hand early and we were served ice-cream which was excellent in quality and thrice-excellent in quantity.

Our daily exercise was taken at this lively little city and as we marched through the streets the townspeople fairly carried us away. Later at the depot our quartette (Ingram, Fleck, Steiler and Ginn) sang in good measure and when the people shouted for more we all sang. O! yes, our Battery was noted as the "singing bunch."

The boys made eyes at the girls on the side and of course the fair sex all just dearly loved the soldier. When our train departed an hour later the boys of the Battery cast back many longing glances.

On this occasion hundreds of post office addresses changed hands and the secret service men were more than foiled in their efforts to guard and uphold Uncle Sam's rule that no military information reach the public, but nothing could stay the dauntless energy of youth. This custom was secretly in order during our entire trip.

It was later at Conneaut, Ohio, early one evening, that an avalanche of humans descended upon our train and scores, yes hundreds of addresses

passed from girl to soldier and from soldier to girl. There were kisses thrown in for good measure at this place and it was my ill-fortune or fortune(ask Mrs. Stone) to be left entirely in the cold. But I enjoyed the energetic tactics of the grown-up babies that mother so recently had cut loose from her apron strings.

To this day some of the boys are in correspondence with "our lady in America" who had casually given an address to a passing soldier and I am not missing my guess if more than one match will be the result. While some of the boys were lavish at first with their letters to addresses galore, others dropt their mailing list completely. Of course there were a few good permanent ones—girls worth knowing as revealed in letters—and these girls receive letters from their soldier boys even to this date.

CHAPTER 6

LAKE ERIE

The fifth day we traveled through Indiana over the Wabash and Nickel Plate and late in the afternoon came to the shore of Lake Erie. Here was an opportunity for a bath and in less time than it usually takes to undress we were all splashing and swimming in the merriest sort of fashion, filled with glee and shouting.

The water was not cold as was our expectation but otherwise, and later we regretfully left the lake. We playfully jumped around upon the shore stark naked and imagined that we were kids back at the old swimming hole.

The dip was refreshing and the boys were well supplied with topics for conversation for the remainder of the day. A bit later the moving train reminded us that we were making a journey in the stern interests of war.

That night we cut through a small strip of New York state and next morning traveled through Pennsylvania. At Sayre, just over the border, we stopped for exercise. At this town I smuggled a letter through to Mrs. Stone. I had suffered my entire correspondence to be censored up to this date, but I was determined to get one intimate letter through, at least, or go to the guard-house in the attempt.

This was my manner of procedure: First I had

my letter ready for the mail. Next I awaited my turn at guard. The time arrived and I walked upon the platform in a military manner. The letter was stowed away in my hat. I approached a car repairman who happened near, told my story and then, when all eyes were turned I removed my hat; simultaneously did the repairman and the letter was simply and quickly bounced from one hat to the other. It worked, too, for later in France I received an acknowledgment from Mrs. Stone. This was my first and only smuggled letter.

During the day we crossed the Delaware, with Washington in mind, and now we were nearing the end of our journey. Corporal Blanky was selling his goods at reduced rates and at the last minute was frantically disposing of an overstock.

The quartette sang louder than ever and the red dust and fallen food churned and churned in chorus. We were glad for that last day; and two hours after midnight we reached our destination, Jersey City, New Jersey, all tired and grimy and thankful.

At daybreak breakfast was served and later we traveled over a spur track to Merritt where we detrained. Details were appointed to load our baggage and ordnance property into waiting trucks and soon we were marching to camp.

During our march we had visions of good things to eat, elaborate hot and cold shower baths and feather beds. And we were not totally disappointed in our visions for at noon that day we had "some feed."

Camp Merritt presented a good appearance and not only this, one could find the conveniences of life therein. Showers were working overtime that afternoon as the boys scrubbed and chased dirt both in clothes and body. We remained in Camp Merritt, the largest concentration camp for overseas troops in America, three days. In the meanwhile we were completely equipped and properly booked for the next transport sailing for Europe.

CHAPTER 7

THE IRON HAND

The entire trip was made in true military style as regards discipline and the guard-house. Our Captain ruled his command with an iron-hand, Haughty, arrogant and proud and lacking in the finer qualities of manhood he caused much distress among the troops. Early in the trip Private Woolaver, who had accidentally spilled a glue-pot upon the First Sergeant's desk, was excommunicated for his pains and thrown into the improvised guard-house under guard. The extra guard entailed extra work and so Woolaver and the guard joined in chorus and denounced the "skipper" in scathing terms.

Gambling was permitted by the Captain but he would not allow the privates and non-coms (non-commissioned officers) to mingle in the games. One fine day the haughty one came through the train unexpectedly and pounced upon Corporal Honey and three privates who were industriously playing at twenty-one. Honey lost his stripes besides landing in the "whosgow" or company guard-house. I have never had a speck of sympathy for gamblers in trouble but for Honey I did. For this reason: He was the unlucky one. Practically every other member of the Battery chanced the game but during the illegitimate pastime all had reserved an eagle-eye. Honey was a good scout.

The third day the guard-house was overflowing. Faulk, Fears, Kottinger and Neustead were guilty of poking their heads out the windows and talking to the girls; giving information to the enemy, the Captain argued. This slight infringement could not be forgotten by our poor big lanky good-natured Faulk and so he suffered on patiently.

Fears laughed and smoked his peace-pipe. And Kottinger, of the tribe of Izy Kazat, closed his large eyes and dreamed of the time when he could follow up the rereating Hun and reign supreme over a huge salvage pile. Kottinger always had a bargain or was willing to make one.

Neustead was the backstop for an excellent flow of wrath. This he stopped in true soldier style and said nothing. I happened to see the performance—I was on guard at the time—and I noticed the smile that escaped from a rather whitened face which bordered onto a grin.

“Shortie” Jorgensen was a problem for the “top.” “Shortie” could never hold his silence and so one day the “top” gave an extra vigorous command to which “Shortie” answered in boiling rage. He went to the guard-house, by request, nor was this “Shortie’s” first experience.

“Portagee” Fonso was picked out by the doctor for violating G. O. No. 45. This short unlearned fellow was so much ballast in our organization and I am ashamed to admit that some of our enlisting officers are without common judgment. This awkward little man the boys would tease in this manner: “No lik-a-da-ba-nan, put back-a-da-

ba-nan, git up r-r-red." Repeated several times this sentence would cause Fonso to fly into a tantrum. He was transferred from our moving "whosgow" to one more permanent in nature. We dropt him at Camp Merritt and I doubt if he ever crossed the Atlantic.

There is a story that came through in a letter from Clark who remained in Camp Merritt because the crabs would not permit of his traveling with us and who was later transfered to a permanent post, that this same poor ignorant Fonso was fined forty dollars for not obeying a corporal. Now Fonso always obeyed his superiors, grudgingly I'll admit, but the real joke of the story is that he did not know the difference between a non-com and a private. His road was a thorny one and I can see his future flight to his native country with stories of the brutal American.

The medical corps did duty in good fashion and we were examined daily. But we took these examinations in a matter-of-fact way due, perhaps, to the numerous subjections which we had already undergone during our enlistment. The nude body has long since ceased to arouse our curiosity and the boys now stalk about in the same manner as the Australian aborigines or the South African Hottentot or even Adam.

The day after our arrival at Camp Merritt we drew our final clothing and equipment. The Captain had discovered that a small rip would warrant an exchange for a new article and so he proceeded to rip-rip right and left and later that afternoon

I gazed at our salvage pile in utter disgust. Dozens of coats, trousers, shirts, shoes and working denims were ruined in the mad rush for something nice and new and "smelly."

CHAPTER 8

OUR FIRST MARCH

Sunday morning bright and early, 3 a. m., to be exact, our Battery was ready to march. We carried full packs and side arms. A sandwich stowed away in our mess-tins represented our future breakfast.

To appreciate the five and a half mile march which we faced it will be necessary for the reader to understand something concerning our packs and extra avoirdupois. Each pack-carrier is normally supposed to weigh 60 pounds. The blanket roll consisted of two heavy army blankets, shelter-half, tent-pole, tent-pins, rope, condiment can, two suits of underwear, five pair of sox, one extra O. D. shirt, blue denims and two towels. The small upper section contained the usual set of toilet articles, towel, mess-tin, knife, fork and spoon. A third blanket was rolled and fastened over the pack in horse-shoe fashion.

Add to this a small shovel, the cartridge belt, canteen, cup, side-arm and scabbard and the pack proper is complete. But we carried extra articles such as soap, tooth-paste and tooth brushes, books, chocolate and foodstuffs. This bulk and our lusty army rifle brought the pounds up and the scales down to the sum of from 75 to 100 pounds. But I can assure you my pack seemed to weigh 500 pounds the second mile out.

Captain Ironhand ordered us about in his usual manner, though I'll admit he found himself a mere unit among the numerous Majors, Colonels, Brigadier Generals and the like.

When at last we moved out into the night our little Battery of 105 men was swallowed up in a sea of soldiers. Seven thousand men traveled the road that morning. At daybreak, as we were ascending the first hill on our way to the Hudson River, we saw the marching Yanks through the early dawn and it seemed that all the troops under enlistment were marching to the river.

Our packs soon became filled with lead, it seemed, and mile after mile we gritted our teeth and went stubbornly forward. This march was our first real taste of warfare and it was an excellent test for weakness. I later heard that a few men fell by the wayside. These men were sent back to camp. Battery B made the grade.

At the summit of the hill we could see New York City in the distance across the river. The climb had been gradual, but once at the river we descended on a 30 deg. to 45 deg. grade and soon reached the waiting Ferry Katskill. Which was well, for our shoulders were simply raw.

A few minutes later the crowded ferry moved down the Hudson passing on its way two large British transports camouflaged in the latest style. The stripes and colors presented a novel sight. Many boys aboard were having their initial boat excursion and they looked on the passing show with wondering eyes. At 10:30 we swung into

dock and fifteen minutes later were hailed by the Red Cross girls and fed. Coffee and buns appeased the pangs of hunger and a package of cigarettes soothed the nerves and dulled the senses.

While standing on the dock ready to be checked in an Intelligence Officer gave the troops a short talk. He spoke of mail conditions and urged each soldier to write home often; then dwelt at length upon the morale of soldiers; and lastly gave the prerequisite of every American soldier: A keen sense of discipline. The talk was fitting, I thought.

CHAPTER 9

THE EMBARKATION

Presently the Battery was summoned to go aboard. Each man passing the gang-plank was required to call, after hearing his surname called by the checking officer, his Christian name and initial.

Battery B was assigned to G-4, one deck below waterline. On our canvas bunks, a few minutes later, we wrote several hurried letters and postcards—the postcards to be mailed from New York upon cable advice of our safe arrival—while the transport was riding at anchor. The boys made a desperate attempt to write, but it was difficult. What could be said? Had not the ten months previous separation at the training camp been sufficient to wring from every heart the fullness of love and manhood and had not the suspense prior to the order to proceed over seas brought forth the best that man could offer in his correspondence? What was left? And what could one write amid the hurry and scurry of soldiers and sailors, the checking of quarters and all the details preparatory to sailing.

So it happened that the mail-bag was filled with thin-looking envelopes.

We were not aware of the time set for sailing and so expected to move without notice. The boys retired early the first evening on board for reasons

which the reader can plainly see and awoke early to find the transport still in port. Anxiously we watched the time and were eager to be off. The hours dragged into the late day and finally as the sun was fading in the western sky a long blast from a deep bass whistle told the story. I wondered at the wisdom of advertising our departure, but later found that Uncle Sam had played a ruse, having anchored in the Sound all night and leaving for deeper waters early in the morning.

Wild rumors spread about the boat next day telling of submarines waiting off the coast, but in these humors I was not a stock-holder.

The voyage across the Atlantic was made in nine days and during those nine days many things both sad and comical came about. The biggest drawing card aboard was the colored band; the least was the latrine guard non-com.

Aboard the liner there were many colored troops. To the blackest and most awkward colored lad I one day chanced a conversation. He was Uncle Sam's very own. Yes, sir, this lad was going over to lick the Boche and lick them good.

"I'ze done gwane to jab ma bayonet clean thru his liver," he spoke in the singular and perhaps had visions of a one-man German Army which he intended to exterminate, no doubt.

His colored friend, a bit brighter, broke in and remarked, "When de bullets come thick an' hebbly and I'ze want a light I'ze done gwan to stiek up ma cigarette and take one." At this juncture we three broke into a hearty laugh and a wider

mouth and whiter teeth I have never seen except once at a Ringling Brothers' Side Show. There is something truly likeable about a negro and I defy anyone to name me a happier race of people. We whites can learn a great lesson in cheerfulness from them.

CHAPTER 10

ON THE HIGH SEA

A colored Regimental Band aboard gave excellent concerts. Each member would lend himself wholly to the harmony of his playing—lost to things physical—and the boys did their best to please their audiences. It was one of my chief delights to hang over the rail and watch the stately ship plough its course thru the water and at the same time listen to the music. The harmony of the sea and of the instruments, united in concert, was refreshing in a high degree.

I spent many hours basking in the sunshine and gazing at the breakers trying to solve the mysteries of the sea and I have no doubt that during those hours I came to understand many things. A person has not experienced the fullness of life until he has taken an ocean voyage.

The first morning out we came up for air and discovered, to our surprise, that we were in convoy; four big liners in all, one on our left and two on our right. The sight presented was a novel one and comforting as well. The submarine was uppermost in mind for we expected any moment to be attacked and of course we argued that four liners could do more damage to the "roving sea-wolf" than our crews could alone.

Thru a system of signals the four transports would alternately change position in such fashion

that each would lead in turn and then drop behind. This zig-zag affair was done to put the submarine commander in an embarrassing position should he attempt to gain accurate firing data. But for all the precaution and patrol made not one "sub" came within sight and we sailed the deep sea in peace.

Number one transport on our extreme right was the Mt. Vernon, formerly the Prince Friedrichschaffen. It was camouflaged in a most fantastic manner. Number two, on our immediate right, was the Agememnon, formerly the Princess Cecelia. This liner and our Amerika were painted the usual battleship grey. To our left was liner number four, an American 90-day product, the Horizaba. Our neighbor on the left bore some relationship to the zebra.

The first morning aboard every man received a life belt to be worn continuously thruout the voyage. Then came the life-saving drill. The Lieutenant Commander of the Amerika was a short fat happy likeable fellow. He wore a number twenty collar about the width of a shoe-string and beads of perspiration stood out upon his freckled brow as the fat rolled upon his neck.

To place 7,000 men in their proper stations required an elaborate program and so we drilled a number of times and on these occasions our fat-man went steaming about the upper deck waving his hands and calling out directions with the beads of perspiration fairly streaming down his cheeks. But we did what was told us and followed ex-

PLICIT instructions, and when it was all over the Lieutenant-Commander would be so pleased that he would smile from ear to ear and his small eyes would disappear beneath the summer sky so plump were his cheeks.

Decks A and B were reserved for the officers. Being a private I did not taste of the extra privileges afforded them nor did I envy the the commissioned man. His path was often a thorny one and his responsibility great.

I know the officers secretly envied us at times and I am sure they missed the spice of life. Owing to the caste system of the army and the absolute rule of a commissioned officer over the private, which of course is necessary in an army I admit, the officer never came to understand the position and feelings of a private in ranks.

One day while aboard I had a very trying day with Captain Ironhand and to relieve my sense of freedom I wrote in my diary the following: When once more I am a free citizen I shall breathe deeply of the elixir or life. I repeat Patrick Henry, "Give me liberty or give me death." And I warn Jones or Smith or Brown or any other man alive or dead not to encroach upon my freedom after I receive my discharge papers.

Our ship's crew was brot to a high pitch of excitement one day when, in the error of exchanging signals, the Mt. Vernon took the wrong course and, before we could believe our eyes, came dashing madly at us. The pilot swung his steering gear just in time to avoid a general smash-up. As it

was, the two liners exchanged generous portions of paint due to the slight impact. This was a close call and we breathed deeply later to recover our balance.

Add to this local tragedy the five casualties among the colored troops en route and our hair-raising episodes are complete. One poor colored lad, probably demented, jumped over-board and was lost. Another was killed outright by a defeated gambler, and the other three died in some manner or other at the hands of violence.

CHAPTER 11

21,000 MEALS DAILY

Feeding the men aboard was a real task and when you consider the 7,000 hungry soldiers, besides the crew, you will see that an absolute system was necessary. Each man held a ticket stating at which mess he was to eat, there being seven messes at each meal.

The boys would form in line beginning at the mess-hall door. This line would extend back thru four or five compartments, around several staircases and then circle back upon itself.

Each table in the dining room seated 20 men, 10 on either side, and each table was served by a permanent K. P. recruited from the ranks of the various companies aboard. These kitchen police brot from the monster-kitchen a coffee pot and an ingenious copper hand-tray of three compartments filled with rations for exactly twenty men.

The waiters, at first, tried various methods in serving the food. At one meal our waiter started the tray at number one man who helped himself and then passed it to number two and so on down the table to the far end where number ten and twenty faced each other. On this occasion I was number twenty and after the food had passed the gauntlet of nineteen men, why, I was just naturally out of luck. After this meal I shunned seat number twenty but as we were seated in the manner of

our entry I once or twice afterwards landed number twenty or its neighbor, nineteen. By this time, however, the waiters had improved their system and the awkward soldiers had learned to be more careful in their helping.

There was a canteen aboard ship and of course the boys spent much money for cookies, candies, canned goods, cigarettes and cigars. The sea remained unusually calm during the entire voyage and so there was no sea-sickness. The mid-ocean air no doubt gave an added zest to the appetite and this was, perhaps, the reason for so much eating.

There is a sad tale to relate about the canteen, sad for those who purchased the most. Everyone wanted something. So the waiting crowd would line up from fore to aft, one long unending line. This state of affairs soon produced a few speculators who purchased extra stock upon arriving at the canteen window and then would dispose of said stock among friends at a profit.

"Bessie" Yourstone of our Battery arose from a mere "buck" private to a prominent popular soldier thru his business energies along these lines as did also our Corporal Blanky tho in a lesser way. No doubt his sad experience of over-stocking on the train was responsible.

Our sleeping quarters were cramped tho comfortable. It was always warm below and the huge fans supplied fresh air continuously. The bunks were placed in groups of twelve, two tiers and three high. The bottom man was blessed with two men directly above but the canvas was tough and

held firmly the solid pounds of all the soldiers.

Men who were fearless and gave little thought to the lurking submarine remained in their bunks every night and took afternoon naps, even. The other men clung to the open deck. The first three days out were pleasant, both day and night, but later it began to rain and when we came nearer to the continent the nights were real cold. But a few timid ones would manage to find some shelter on board and remain wrapped in blankets thru the frigid night air.

CHAPTER 12

A COLORED TRAGEDY

I am now about to relate a tragedy. At the port of embarkation there were many thousands of troops constantly in waiting for transportation. Tonnage was lacking and the natural result was an over-crowding of the ocean liners. It was urgent that U. S. troops proceed to France without delay and so each transport was crammed and jammed to overflowing.

On the Amerika every white soldier was assigned to a permanent bunk which remained in his possession throught the trip. There was an opportunity to poke the articles of every day use here and there among the rafters and to hang packs and clothing upon the sides of the bunks for convenience.

Not so with the colored boys. A day and night shift was organized and one-half the colored troops remained above while the other half retired to the bunks. Those who took their winks during the day were the unfortunate ones for theirs was a hard road each night, especially after the third day out. The wind was bitter and the poor fellows huddled together on deck thru the long night hours as best they could and when at last morning would come they stirred about half-dead. The hard floor made many a kink but the boys suffered on.

Everyone wore the life-belt day and night. The white soldiers were issued the jacket style, comfortable, warm and of good appearance. The colored lads received the common square back-carrier and these awkward belts strapped upon the back made them appear as hunchbacks, especially if a greatcoat was put on over all.

Thievery being prevalent among the colored boys (a racial trait, I am sorry to say) each man was obliged to keep an eagle eye on his possessions. And so each day the boys rolled their packs and carted their possessions about the deck.

The sight was a comical one: The colored soldier and his sea-going trappings. Of course they played the canteen line and I can now vividly recall numerous packages of crackers, sardines, sandwiches, sparkling eyes and white teeth, cigarettes, cigars, smoke and temporary contentment.

They were also assigned to certain portions of the decks. At night the colored boy, wishing to find a warm spot, would crawl stealthily into a corridor. The guards usually caught the men doing this and would send them flying back to their board-beds, out in the freezing night.

"Look here, soldier, you can't stay there," was the remark usually heard. And he couldn't stay here and "nowhere, nohow," and one raw-boned fellow was cautioned so many times he finally blurted out, "Where can I'se stay?" Later this same fellow, after repeatedly moving his pack and equipment about, by request, became desperate and

threw the "whole works" overboard. He was not to be bothered further.

Many instances came to hand later of equipment disappearing overboard. It simplified matters; the soldier would be rid of just so much luggage and Uncle Sam would supply a fresh outfit on arrival in France.

The shameful discrimination shown aboard was undoubtedly stamped upon the consciousness of the colored troops and in the future will represent an added obstacle in the already perplexing National Racial Problem.

Abe Lincoln must have looked on in shame. This great liberator did a noble work during his earthly incarnation; let there come among us others of his caliber to continue a work which he inaugurated and help us in erasing the many, many scores which we have piled up against our Free America. These human souls must receive recognition.

CHAPTER 13

GAMBOL, GAMBLE AND GOSPEL

Games were in order. One rough game named "hot-hand" evoked many a laugh and the merriment would be great at times. "Curly" Best was an expert at "hot-hand" and he was generally in evidence. Now the paraphernalia used in this game consists of ordinary paddles, or no paddles at all. The object is to spank a stooping soldier and then come quickly to an innocent position. If the one being spanked could point out his adversary from the surrounding crowd then he would be relieved from duty and the guilty culprit could look forward to some good healthy slaps. "Curly" did some husky work and, the good sport that he was, would take his turn if caught.

Quoits was another game, similar to horse-shoe, the object being to throw a round ring over a distant peg. A simple game it was, tho fairly over-worked by those wishing to "kill" time.

Cards and dice, the old favorites, claimed considerable attention tho it was "agin' the rules." The negro is generally pointed out as being a natural gambler, especially at dice, but many of our boys take to the game with as much enthusiasm. This twin-vice is a National Liability.

Four decks below over in the extreme corner, in the worst sort of light, would gather the gamblers, and a lookout. I have overheard many dice games which run in this fashion:

"Shoot a half!"—the money would be quickly covered by a dozen or more and then the player would begin his game in earnest. He would shake the pair of dice in his closed fist, blow thereon and then roll them on the floor, saying, "Ah! the old natural!" If old natural refused to bob up then the number struck would be the mark and the player would roll the dice repeatedly until either his number reappeared or he "crapped" (meaning throwing seven, which number would have won had he rolled it at the initial throw). If four was his point to make the player would lean over and shout (or whisper in this instance to conceal the secrecy of the game) "come, little Joe," or "ma baby needs a new pair of shoes," or "talk fo yo daddy," or "dice, be nice," *ad finem*.

Corporal Blanky was the biggest man of the game and played heavy stakes. The little "fish" would sometimes take him down for a hundred or two hundred dollars. But he knew the game only too well to the sorrow of the small gambler. At one time later he had 1500 francs in his jeans, all illicit money.

Blanky's was an odd character. Perhaps he received more notoriety in the Battalion than any other man except Mess-Sergeant Ash of Battery C who later at the front had a hand blown off, and the reader will further agree with me when I relate the following:

Blanky, one fair day, sat upon deck looking out over the still waters. A very trifling incident, something I cannot now even recall, irritated him

and so, calmly, apparently, he reached into his pocket, extracted therefrom a handful of coins threw the whole of it overboard. He liked to make grandstand plays—and the coins once overboard he dismissed the subject from his mind. As chief food and tobacco vendor upon the train he no doubt could afford to empty the profits of his trade into the sea.

“Jack” Renner would not be outdone on this occasion and he, too, threw a handful of coins at the fishes. A strange pair.

There were Y. M. C. A. men aboard. Some were white, others were colored. Let me tell you right here, dear reader, that one of the best “Y” men I have ever met was aboard and he was colored, too. He was a real gentleman, another Booker T. Washington, and served his men faithfully, unselfishly.

Many men were bitter towards the Y. M. C. A. and in my conversation with hundreds of men aboard I discovered the same underlying complaint, *id est*, the Y. M. C. A. as a war-organization was nothing more nor less than a huge machine built for profit.

But when all is said and done there is no question but that the Y. M. C. A. did good work for the boys, tho the amount expended compared to the amount accomplished was out of all proportion.

I can see a “miniature tornado” coming and so before I am overwhelmed with wrath from the

peaceful lovers of things Y. M. C. A. let me proceed with my story.

Much can be said for the Red Cross, so much so that I will not linger for my pen cannot do justice to this great humanitarian work which President Wilson so nobly represents as Honorary President.

While on these subjects let me say a word for the Salvation Army. The finest talk I have ever heard on the continent was in a Salvation Army hut. This organization has won a place in the heart of every soldier and I have yet to hear the first complaint.

That small group of people down on the corner of your home town with red-tipped caps, flying banner and bass-drum will awake to a new life after the war. Irving Cobb paid these deserving people, followers of the immortal Booth, a lasting tribute and in his characteristic way wrote: "Thru the grease of doughnuts and by the grace of God," *et cetera*. The doughnut was a staple article in the huts and God was not forgotten. Rather, His Spirit animated the whole organization and their untiring services were proof. I cannot say too much for the Salvation Army.

On the sixth day (Sunday) I attended morning mass as read by a Catholic Army Chaplain, the Rev. Leonard. I did not understand the Latin words but I did enjoy the later lecture which was delivered in good earnest. I am not a Roman Catholic—my religion is the "Ancient Order of the 'Open Road.'" However, I appreciated the

efforts of this clergyman and felt that the boys under his care were spiritually benefited.

I have a hearty regard for all the spiritual teachers representing every denomination of every religion, the so-called "heathen" Buddhists included. I think Sir Rabindranath Tagore, India's ideal and winner of the Nobel Prize, shattered much prejudice in the States during his travels in 1917.

CHAPTER 14

FRANCE

Forty-eight hours out from the port of debarkation we were met by six submarine cruisers. The sight was truly a naval parade done up in the interests of the "sub" and we eagerly watched their tactics darting back and forth guarding the huge transports. They were real cute—that expresses it—because they were so small compared to our ocean-going liners, and they bobbed up and down on the waves like so many corks.

This protection was an added comfort for now the submarine was hopelessly out-classed, thanks to Secretary of Navy, Mr. Daniels.

There was great rejoicing among the troops on the morning of June 19th when we sighted the white chalky cliffs of Dover, England. In the dim, dim distance we strained our eyes to behold, and slowly the first glimpse of land hovered in sight, then became larger and nearer until finally we could see land. We then discovered that we were gazing on the shores of France.

Only those who have traveled across a large body of water can appreciate the sensation of discovering land—dry land. The nine days on water were surely a long period of time, especially for the soldier who is usually a landlubber, otherwise he would have joined the Navy and sailed the seven seas to his heart's delight.

The four big liners swung into single file just outside the Harbor of Brest and we were soon winding thru the channel. At high noon we dropt anchor.

The City of Brest was eagerly scanned from our position. The stone buildings stood irregularly upon the cliffs giving a rugged effect to the city. I was reminded of the ancient ruins of Pompeii which Bulwer Lytton has so vividly depicted.

About the harbor was every evidence of American construction. A broad cement wall had been constructed across the channel to protect the vessels, riding at anchor, from the midnight prowling submarine. In this sub-harbor were numerous transports, submarine cruisers, auxilliary cruisers and darting to and fro about the bay were the numerous gasoline launches bearing officers or messengers.

Activity was at its height. Here the products of war were being dropt; men, food, guns, cannon, shot and shell; equipment for infantry, artillery, cavalry and engineers; huge Baldwin locomotives, airplanes and all the accessories of warfare, industry *per se*.

The same afternoon a large portion of the troops were towed to the dock on barges. But our Battalion remained aboard and for three days and nights we labored industriously removing the contents of the huge liner. The first night about 8 p. m. a detail of ten men, myself included, began the job of unloading the mail. Have you ever visited a granary and noticed the sacks of wheat

or oats piled high? The enormous hold at the ship's bottom presented just such a sight.

Millions of precious letters, filled with love, passed thru our hands that night. The mail sacks were relayed from the hold to a waiting net which was hoisted to the top deck and over the side by a wench. It was done systematically, tho noisily, and each net-full represented an ordinary auto truck load.

We worked four hours and then were relieved by the next shift. Early next morning the last sack was carried out of the hold and from all accounts there were a dozen letters waiting for every soldier in France, besides a bundle or two.

In another hold of the ship our boys accidentally shattered a box containing whisky and address to the Chief Surgeon for medical purposes. Well—you know what happened, naturally enough. Several boys nursed sick headaches the next day.

CHAPTER 15

A LIVELY RECEPTION

On the 22nd of June at 11 :00 o'clock our Battery placed foot upon French soil. We stood in company front upon the wharf and Captain Ironhand pranced about in all his splendor. I had stuffed a magazine into my blouse leaving one end showing a trifle. This the Captain discovered—he was always looking for trifles—and suddenly a quick succession of words played in taccato time upon my guileless head. I threw the magazine over into the water. It was "Popular Mechanics."

Ten minutes later, while standing between two long sheds with full pack awaiting further orders, several of the boys being weary sat down upon the ground. Others were munching away at a sandwich and boiled egg. I had thrown my pack aside and was eating leisurely with the others when lo! and behold, who goes there? Captain Ironhand and his first Sergeant who is taking the names of several men. We were quick to note the state of affairs and I deftly crammed my egg and bread down the center hole of a roll of tar-paper thinking this to be the source of trouble. I was safe, I thot, but wait! The reason for all the commotion was that orders had not been given to "unsling packs." My name went down and my heart went up and I lost my lunch in the bargain.

Reader, take heart for Ironhand will soon leave

the scene. This was our reception upon entering the sacred country of France, home of Joan of Arc.

Soon we were moving along the streets of Brest and the children greeted us singing: "Hail, hail the gang's all here; What the h— do we care, What the h— do we care."

The peasants were not so enthusiastic. Had not thousands of troops preceeded us? Marching columns of khaki were now an ordinary sight in the streets of Brest.

The children, having learned of the generosity of Americans fresh from the States, ran along begging for "souvenir pour papa," or "chocolat," "un sou," or "deux sou," or as many as one was inclined to give away. I possessed a few extra U. S. coins of small denomination and these I scattered over the heads of the younger folk.

Private Yourstone, who was walking next to me and who had an exceptionally sweet tooth, sank ten degrees in hunger when I gave my last bar of chocolate to a little girl with rosy cheeks and wooden shoes.

The custom of donating presents to the children soon became a distressing problem and months later the boys would frown upon a child-beggar and utter, "Al a toot sweet"—meaning to get away very quick.

We mounted the village street, passed thru a long tunnel and later gained the upper road. As we marched thru the village I was beset by an interplay of emotions such as is impossible to de-

scribe. The quaint French of Brest are strictly foreign in all that the word implies. Were the fancies of storybooks and childhood fiction coming to life?

Around each grog-shop grouped the Frenchmen all wearing long black tunics, wooden shoes, picturesque hats and smoking long-stemmed pipes.

The stone houses, all irregularly built, were surrounded by massive wall-fences. We came in mid-summer and all vegetation was at its best. Creeping vines covered the high walls and sweet *fleur-de-lis* poured forth its perfume on every breeze.

Yet another emotion seemed to grip my heart as I turned to the Loved One at home 8,000 miles away. Just as the Rockies had presented the first great physical barrier the Atlantic now represented the next and I came to realize that daytime in France meant nighttime in the States. As we marched on I was one with my thots and while I was spinning a day-dream around The Girl an old verse came to mind and I repeated:

“I pray a prayer that the Easterns do,
May the peace of Allah abide with you.”

CHAPTER 16

YEA, UNTO ETERNITY

Two miles beyond the town we came to our rest camp. Camp Pontenazin by name and a product of Napoleonic times, ancient and awkward. Within the four walls of an antiquated barracks and upon hardwood floors we spent the first night of our rest period.

Next day our hips were numb and our tempers hot. We remained within this camp just 24 hours and when we were once more marching down the highway we gave free vent to our feelings and fairly sang out into the summer day.

This was Sunday and the French people were returning from church. The men wore large brim hats, gracefully curved upward on either side and with ribbons dangling in the breeze. All carts and wagons are of the two wheel variety in the small towns and country districts of France, and big and cumbersome they are, just so many extra pounds to drag around. But then the French are accustomed to manufacturing articles which are to be used by the third and fourth generations—yea, unto eternity.

One incident is worth mentioning before we leave the scene of the rest camp. While in ranks upon the parade grounds my friend Sharp was pounced upon by Captain Ironhand and was questioned as to the absence of the red cord upon his

hat. In the shuffle Sharp had misplaced it—and this excuse he gave.

“It’s a poor soldier who can’t find another,” shot back the Captain, meaning, of course, to commit thievery and make another suffer. A splendid ethical teaching from a “leader” of men!

On the way to the station we passed a group of German prisoners under guard. This was our first glimpse of the Boche—the hated Hun. Numerous smiles and glowing cheeks made it appear that they were contented. No longer was it their lot to enter active service and suffer casualty. Here at least they were assured a future return to their native land; here they received more pay, better food and proper shelter.

Stories leaked thru later, when we reached the Front, to the effect that many Germans, learning that the Americans paid their prisoners good wages, considering, gave up in surrender and I believe this to be true.

At the railway station everything was made in readiness for the Battalion’s departure. Old-fashioned sectional coaches, first, second and third class cars, were placed at our disposal. Officers were prancing about discharging their various duties, checking, directing and making copious remarks upon dozens of sheets of paper.

Eight men—7 privates and 1 corporal—were assigned to each compartment. One squad luckily fell heir to a second class coach, plush seats and everything. Corporal Chenowith, in charge of our squad, was later directed to report for rations

which he did and returned to our lair with seven cans of corned-beef (canned Charley), four cans baked beans, four cans tomatoes, two cans jam and twenty packages of hard-tack; rations which were intended for two days' travel.

Eight healthy physiques, army equipment and cans and cans of "grub" all tucked away in one small compartment presented a novel sight, indeed. Our experience crossing the States in fine Pullmans was now about to be placed in Class A-1. French rolling stock fell below par before we were two miles out.

We took our "shut-eye" or naps sitting up except Brazie, who managed to spread out his limbs to his comfort and our discomfort.

Then the food problem had to be settled but fortunately we had a cook in the crowd who portioned out for seven meals and served the rations in equal amount. "Drag" LaGrange was the name of this fine fellow; in fact so fine and so capable was he that he usually landed a good position in the Battery. For this reason the boys argued that he had a "pull," or better still, a "drag" with the Top Sergeant. For months I knew this boy by no other name.

The following is a list of nicknames which have been firmly fastened to each member; nicknames that came about in a natural way as all true nicknames must:

"Gopher" Ward, "Ham" Miller, "Snapper" Ingram, "Peg" O'Neill, "Student" Donley, "Feet" Faulk, "Frog" Foix, "Pigeys" Jester,

"Fine Points" Lyon, "Old Man" Daniel, "Beany" Walker, "Bessie" Yourstone, "Rope Neck" Bedford, "Curly" Best, "Hay Shaker" Brazie, "Lieut." Herron, "Ironman" Jenifer, "Kike" Kottinger, "Matty" Mathews, "Lead" Needham, "Mother" Pelbrough, "Deacon" Powers, "Military" Sewell, "Auk" Sterne, "Eagle Beack" Sundquist, "Kid" Thompson, and "Handy" Willian. All expressive, all familiar.

The boys usually called me Stone but some ventured to call me "Stony"—and somehow, you know, I felt slighted. There is something intimate, something comforting in a nickname, however ugly or grotesque.

CHAPTER 17

FROM BREST TO PARIS

We departed from Brest at two in the afternoon and the first few hours we rather enjoyed. It was medicine to counteract both the twelve days spent on the high sea and the one night on the hard floor back at Napoleon's hut.

The country all about was under cultivation and was "greeny" green. One thing we Americans could not understand: Considering the density of population for the small state of France we could not see why so many acres were taken up by hedges, useless hedges. But on second thot I knew the natural beauty which the hedges afforded and knew it satisfied the temperament of the French peoples.

On a Texas farm, for instance, one finds a square house and a square barn, both of brilliant color; and as is generally the rule there is a straight path from the front door to the front gate.

Now in France this is not so. On a side hill (France is mostly hilly) you discover a stone house, ancient and moss-covered. An irregular path, hedged and crooked, leads up to and around the house according to the topography of the land. As you approach the stone cottages you discover that additions have been made to these clumsy houses from generation to generation and it would require no insight to see that the latest additions are

always "plastered" on where they most conveniently fit regardless of architecture or style.

House and barn are one and the owner presides over his stock and lives with them under intimate circumstances.

All the farms are pieced together much the same as a crazy-quilt. Wide hedges surround each farm and subdivide it, especially if there are numerous physical barriers.

The small, quaint locomotive went dashing forward, its whistle striking high G at every blast and our frail coaches followed merrily along.

All meals were taken under difficulties tho we did manage to get a large portion of the food into our wide-spreading mouths. Note the expression: "Hey, Shortie, grab this with your lunch hooks and put it behind the counter." Meaning, gentle reader, that we were being cautioned to firmly hold the food with our hands and see to it that we put the said food into our mouth and swallowed same. Expressions of this character no doubt were responsible for a limited vocabulary. Or was our limited vocabulary responsible for the expressions?

Slang has one rival—profanity. The provincial soldier is profanity incarnate. And I can assure you that 95% (my friend Woolaver who is this minute sitting at a near table, claims 99%) use profanity. And as the coaches dashed forward bouncing and churning the whole of us, equipment and all, nothing would sooth the nerves quite so much as profanity and later a cigarette for good measure.

Then there was another annoyance. Some claimed that the corned-beef was nothing more nor less than horse-meat, just plain ordinary dead horse done up with seasoning and placed in cans. But hunger got the best of us and later we ate without a whimper.

The reader will appreciate and understand my position when I state that previous to entering the army I was a vegetarian. For four years I touched neither flesh, fish or fowl. My diet consisted wholly of fruit, vegetables, bread, dairy products, nuts, raisins, olives, maple sugar, honey and many other good wholesome foods.

On this trip we became intimately acquainted with old hard-tack. Now hard-tack is just plain white flour. The baker makes a paste, using water, and when it is just the right consistency into the oven the tack goes and bakes and bakes; or, is there pressure brot to bear upon the innocent flour and compressed to the nth degree of hardness? My gums were made tender even to a week later.

We rolled into the outskirts of Paris about 7:00 p. m. on the second day. The Chicago-New York Limited would have made the trip in nine hours. One lad spied the Eiffel Tower, the tallest structure in the world, and we then knew that we were entering the metropolis of France. We were not informed as to our destination; some argued we were going to the Front and detrain under the fire of the Boche guns and there go into fighting—with bayonets fixed, even.

But all this faded with the sight of Tour Eiffel

and we secretly harbored a desire to remain in or near Paris, for a while at least. Which desire was fulfilled for later in the evening we came to the end of our rough journey at Stains near St. Denis near Paris.

Twenty-six days had elapsed since the day we left San Diego, California. We had traveled from the extreme southwest corner of the United States to Paris, a distance of 8,000 miles, or one-third the circumference of the earth, in the interests of war. The trip proved a strenuous one and when at last we rolled into straw bunks at two o'clock in the early morning we fell into a lethargic sleep.

CHAPTER 18

FORT DE STAINS

Fort de Stains is one fort of a series which surrounds Paris. It was converted into an Anti-Aircraft School and Headquarters soon after the United States entered the war and it was here that our Battery went into final training, leaving for the Front nine weeks later.

At a distance Fort de Stains appears to be a small innocent hill covered with small trees. Approaching it upon the road that leads out of the small village of Stains you travel in a northwesterly direction, pass a few scattered farm houses and then near the entrance you will find a wine-shop where young men purchase *vin rouge* and *vin blanc*. You turn a corner and follow a road cut deeply in the earth. One more slight turn and the front gate comes into sight. Looking up to the massive arch one reads—1874 FORT de STAINS 1878.

The arched tunnel is about one hundred feet in length and the night we entered the Fort it was dark, very dark, and as we streamed in thru this tunnel I had visions of a cliff-dweller's palace or an underground city where one meets with strange people and strange sights.

It was a standing joke within the Battery that several of the boys on this occasion had really mistaken the deep cut road and the tunnel for trenches at the Front. As a matter of fact we were 25 miles from the Chateau-Thierry Front.

The boys soon discovered their mistake, however, and were thankful.

After we had arrived at Paris and waited till darkness set in to allow for a final troop movement under cover of darkness, we began the last lap of our journey. The train switched from one track to another, darting this direction and that direction until all sense of direction was done—a jumbled mass. We traveled on and on and then, finally, at a few minutes past midnight, we came to an abrupt stop. Orders came to clear the cars of equipment, sling packs and prepare to march.

Trucks were at hand to receive the Battery's ordnance and property and the usual orders were exchanged between the officers. It was very dark and only an officer was permitted to use a flashlight. In the distance we could see the flare of artillery fire.

While skirting the small city of Stains we passed several French guards wearing helmets. The country seemed lifeless and not having the slightest idea as to our geographical position the reader will understand why the boys were seemingly entering the Front Line Trenches.

Fort de Stains, like all other forts and cities in France, is surrounded by a moat. In olden times this moat, filled with water, presented a real barrier to the enemy, especially if the invader or Knight of Old retained his steel armor plate. High rock walls surround the fort and there is but one entrance—the hundred foot tunnel.

The space within the walls represents about

twenty acres. All buildings are of stone and buried beneath ten to twenty feet of earth. Stories were circulated telling of a wonderful arsenal somewhere within the bowels of the earth and of secret tunnels leading into unknown parts, but during my residence at this Fort I saw nothing that would indicate an arsenal of a wonderful character. I did, however, discover a couple of secret passages.

The second night at the Fort broke out in aerial activity and to us it was the time of a great and solemn initiation. Night raiders were storming Paris and the anti-aircraft defense guns sent out an ominous night cry, an alarm well known to Parisians. We were tucked away in sleep, apparently, but in reality every nerve and fiber of our bodies was taut with phantasm for we could see the German war-machine rolling in on Paris—in our minds.

The airmen dropt several deadly missiles on Paris, which we could distinguish above the din of anti-aircraft fire; and later retired to the German line. Once more all was quiet and we finally fell into a restless sleep.

All thru the nine weeks at the Fort we were never without excitement. Several daylight raids were attempted under our very eyes but now the novelty was gone and we scarce winked an eye when the planes came on. Instead we would stand in the open fields and watch the side-show.

Big Bertha, 74 miles away, dropt a shell two blocks over the way and the explosion hurled the earth several hundred feet in the air. It was al-

ways a question where the next shell would land. Nearly every morning she was active and we could count the shells at a fifteen minute interval as they landed within the confines of Paris.

Later, at the Front, when we had been initiated into real artillery activity, we remembered the pop-gun warfare around Fort de Stains with a smile.

CHAPTER 19

COMEDY AND TRAGEDY

Every soldier was his own laundryman and a wash-tub crew gathered daily around the large cement basin to scrub their clothing French style, using a brush in lieu of a wash-board. A good stiff brush will work wonders even in cold water.

A bit of "elbow-grease" often transformed a young fellow, in fact as the days went by you could count several real "classy" dressers; gentlemen a la Uncle Sam. Additional clothes were purchased in St. Denis or Paris, also linen, silk handkerchiefs, perfume, good-looking service caps and special spiral leggings. Jack Renner was an excellent type of dresser as was also Joe Kirk.

Every morning reveille was sounded at 6:15 and sleepily the men aroused themselves to don their military attire, after which side-arms and rifle or revolver completed their equipment. Out thru the long narrow halls the Batteries would crowd and then form in a company front. Every man must be accounted for and those who attempted to take a few extra winks, and miss reveille as a result, were punished by a week's K P or some other disagreeable fatigue.

So it behooved every man to answer the detestable bugle even tho he die in the attempt. One can easily imagine the sweet flow of epithets every

morning that sounded forth from deep bass voices, amid "blinky" eyes.

Breakfast was served at 6:30. Now breakfast or any other meal was always a source of much movement—quick movement and merriment. The quick movement was accomplished in this manner, the object being to be the first man in the mess-line: Rush from the ranks into a small hall in sardine-packed fashion, wiggle and squirm down the hall, around a corner, then into another very dark hall, into a small door, down a narrow aisle and finally, the individual's bunk reached, there would be, after dropping gun and side-arms and grabbing mess-tin, the inverse movement down the aisle, thru the door, down the hall, around the corner, down a pair of cement stairs into the basement and finally stop before the serving bench all breathless and smiles.

This movement (it became worse as the time went on) was done in thirty seconds to one minute by the watch. The usual noise and racket was in evidence and there would be shouting such as, "run you mess-hounds" or "go and get it" or just ordinary plain excessive guttural non-music and screeching and whistling. The officer in charge never interfered with this ceremony. Rather he would stand by and watch the performance with interest and glee.

All meals were taken upon the ground French fashion. With mess-pan heaping each man would choose a plot of ground, squat and begin the performance. It was June and July when our Bat-

tery went into training and during those hot months there were many flies, yellow bees and much dust.

If a careless fly would be so unfortunate as to slip into the soup—well, we were hungry, or we could not get a second helping, or the kitchen would be too far away, or—well, the fly would be rudely extracted, cursed and then we just proceeded with our mess in an unconcerned manner. We, no doubt, devoured many flies—to the sorrow of the fly.

Each man washed his mess-tins in a bucket of soapy water supplied by the kitchen force, then would immerse the same tins in a bucket of clear water, after which each man plied his individual dish towel. These poor towels would soon be stiff.

And now I have given you a hint as to the beginning of a day. All days that followed were alike except Sunday. On this day we were allowed to take our extra winks and no work was given.

Ralph Ginn was our first representative in the guard-house or better, the “whosgow.” Ginn had forgotten himself and talked back to a Sergeant, but he was soon free again and sang louder than ever.

Steger cooked industriously for a month and then one fine day disappeared from view. Three days passed and then a guard was sent to St. Denis to find him. The guard did his job in quick order and returned to camp with his captive. Steger spent the following days in the guard-house charged with drunkenness.

Others disturbed the peace or broke the rules and were incarcerated. The saddest sight I saw while at the Fort was the case of H——, a man, by the way, who came from another Battery. A Lieutenant had searched this suspected man and found eighty francs of another's money concealed in his shoe. A plain thief.

As H—— sat upon a small stool in the cell he stared at the floor in silence. His manner seemed strange but I did not pay unusual attention to him as I walked my post. Suddenly I found him outstretched upon the cell cot, stiff and trembling. I called the medical corps Sergeant who returned and poured spirits of ammonia into his open mouth. This, he argued, would bring H—— to his senses. But it did not and the prisoner became violent. We held him down and the sergeant gave him the needle.

H—— relaxed somewhat and then again grew stiff. More ammonia was administered and another needle of morphine was injected into his physical being. He finally dropt into a peaceful sleep, which was fortunate, for I am satisfied that he had unconsciously practiced self-hypnosis and was well on the road to insanity.

According to the laws of medicine ammonia makes one deathly sick if not thrown from the system, but H—— awoke later as from a refreshing sleep. A strange case. His sentence was six months and two-thirds pay forfeited.

In France the American soldier was allowed to purchase light wines and beer which was contrary

to the rule in the States. The first weeks produced many intoxicated men from Battery B. Several of our boys came to grief, returning to the Fort all soiled, sick and francless. Others were not quite so indulgent and were comical to see. The sodden drunk is a nuisance; the light drinker is often a great source of enjoyment.

"Deacon" Powers comes to mind as representing our comical drunk. Once he returned to the barracks under the influence of liquor. He proceeded to praise or condole, shout or weep with all whom he contacted; he laughed and cried in turn and performed in all manner of grotesque movements. Next morning "Dec" was none the worse for his experience.

Corporal Bibby is about the happiest man I know and is ten times merrier under the cup. He and Sergeant Miller would have some lively arguments for the benefit of their audiences.

"Auk" Sterne would get "stewed" and come home walking on top of the world. He would imagine himself a supreme lord and completely and fully satisfied with himself and everything in life.

"Pigeon" Jester wore a perpetual smile; this smile became a decided grin when "pickled." Honey is a happy-go-lucky lad and spent several francs for *vin rouge* and *vin blanc*.

Tahar, the "terrible Turk," one fair evening invited me to have supper with him at a French tavern. I went. We had a sumptuous meal placed before our eyes and a bottle of choice wine as well.

Now I am a teetotaler and had not touched the cup since my foolish boyhood days, but on this occasion I partook of a glass, for old time's sake, you know.

Tahar and I came home that night somewhat "under the weather" and I remember later how I tapped my friend Goddard on the shoulder saying, "Your old friend stepped out tonight." After that day I was known as the "high-stepper," but soon Jimmie Adams robbed me of the beautiful title.

It has oft times been said that France has been drunk for 200 years. Every Frenchman is a consumer of wine from the cradle to the grave. Wine is the National drink and replaces the pure water. Practically every corner store in town and along the highway is a grog-shop; every restaurant is one-half saloon.

The average Frenchman is undersized and I have no doubt that the National drink is responsible. State prohibition in France is a wild dream, for the present generation, at least.

If the boys had limited their drink to light wine and beer only it would have caused less trouble, but the crafty French bar-keepers, violating the ordinance, would sell cognac, champagne and triple-sec to the soldiers. Our cook was a consumer of the last named and he usually did the drunk all "dressed up." His periodical sprees were always disastrous but he would repeat the drunken orgies in spite of all the advice and generous help from boys in the Battery.

CHAPTER 20

CAPTAIN IRONHAND FALLS

The first days at Fort de Stains were spent in listening to lectures and hearing all the latest "dope" about modern warfare, especially that pertaining to airplane defense.

Just as the enlisted personnel was receiving instruction, so also were the commissioned officers and Captain Ironhand left our Battery to proceed to school at a Chateau several miles from the Fort. He never returned to the command of our Battery but on several occasions paid us visits.

It was a month later that this poor defeated man—he had not made good at school—came to see "his boys" who happened to be training on the guns at the time under the command of Lieut. Emerick (later made Captain).

Ironhand sat down in the field like a boy and Sergeant Fleck sat with him. With tears in his eyes he said, "Fleck, practice the Golden Rule. I am now receiving just what I gave." About this time Ironhand became ill and then went to the hospital. He was suffering from some internal trouble.

Captain Ironhand had one friend in the Battery, a one Mr. Private Abdullah B. Tahar. To this "terrible Turk" the skipper would unfold his troubles—and it was pitiful to see; this man who had played the big game; who had stalked about all haughty and proud.

“Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

Months later my friend Woolaver received a letter from his mother residing in Los Angeles, telling of a one Captain Ironhand parading ostentatiously about the streets of the Angel City and posing as a wounded soldier—a wound from a bursting shell was the tale.

And so the last day on the field, sitting with Sergeant Fleck, we saw this man for the last time, and when it was understood by the boys that Ironhand would not return to torture us further we breathed deeply.

But now our reward was at hand. Lieut. John H. Emerick had come to our rescue, and a better finer nobler soldier I have yet to meet. Lieut. Emerick was a man. His cards were face up, as he once told a private, and he wanted us to play the same game. Nothing henceforth would be secrecy nor would he tolerate unfair play of any sort.

The nine weeks that this gentleman remained with the Battery as instructor were sufficient to re-make the entire personnel. Everyone straightened up and put his heart and soul into the work. Everyone played the game. To this day the men remember Lieut. Emerick—yes, they will always remember him.

Thru the days that followed we drilled, drilled, drilled. Four gun crews and the range section soon became keen rivals and with a boisterous voice, yet gentle in spirit, each man would ascend

to the mountain top and proclaim to the world the merits of his gun crew. Soon each crew could "call off" and then "post" in a snappy manner.

Lieut. Emerick was a worker and whenever there was a lag in the field he would stir the men and fill them with enthusiasm. His short talks to us on "A Soldier's Duty" were taken to heart by the men. I shall not go into technique of anti-aircraft artillery here, but will cover the subject in an interesting way when we reach the Front.

CHAPTER 21

LOCAL TRAVEL

Passes were allowed the second day at Fort de Stains. Local passes to Stains, St. Denis, La Bourge, Perrifeitte were issued on week days and Paris passes were given Saturdays and Sundays. Sgt. Ledgerton worked overtime on the pass list and, mathematician that he was, he could not divide ten passes, the number allowed, by a hundred. Try as he would there were always ninety men over.

Now to keep ninety good husky men out of Paris on Saturdays and Sundays was a task. All barriers at the Fort even vanished under the ingenious schemes of American youth and soon the local travel became extensive.

After drill hours it was a common sight to see a stream of khaki-clad men meandering off to the several villages surrounding the Fort. After inspection on Saturday the Fort was literally deserted.

My first trip to Paris was made without a pass. Impatient to see the famous French city I chanced the trip on a scrap of paper which I called a pass, but which was as invalid as an American nickel in China. The military police in Paris could make trouble for one without a proper pass but I was willing to take a long chance. On the very day that I was in Paris Sgt. Hisey was picked up with-

out a pass, but he managed to bribe the M. P. and escaped from the clutches of the law just fifty francs short.

From Fort de Stains to Paris, via La Opera, the trip is made in about an hour. First is the fifteen minute walk to the village of Stains. Then, if luck is with you, you catch the double-decked shaky street-car. We always retired to the top story to see the sights, you know. In motion the car would swing and rock like a cradle making all future movements very uncertain, and we often looked forward to a good healthy smash-up.

This short line runs into St. Denis in about ten minutes with a fare mounting up to the magnificent sum of one and a half pennies. At St. Denis you transfer to a yellow street-car, and a conductor-woman, dressed in black with belt, purse and combination transfer rack strapped about the waist, collects your fare in a very impersonal manner.

All public utilities employed women during the war and the street-car was a fair example. The women accomplished their work and were efficient but a source of much interest to Americans.

The boys always had difficulty in paying their fares. To escape revealing our ignorance we would pay in a silver coin and receive the change in copper trusting to the calculations of our woman-conductor. As a consequence of this practice, which we carried into all our business transactions, we usually returned to the Fort with a pocket full of "clankers" or coppers, five and ten centime pieces.

For fifteen centimes you can ride first-class to the gates of Paris. Towards the end of this slight journey our car would usually be filled and I can now hear our conductor-lady shouting to the waiting passengers, "*complete*," pronounced com-play, then blow lustily upon a whistle which reminded us of the fish-man back home. Many times the Americans would cry out, "fish," to the amusement of all aboard.

At the city gate you descend into the depths of the earth to catch the underground Metropolitan, called Metro for convenience. About twenty minutes ride brings you to La Opera or Place de la Concorde, the central points of Paris. The Metro underground of Paris is, beyond doubt, one of the finest systems in the world. For fifteen centimes one can ride second-class from one end of the city to the other, a distance of many miles—comfortably and quickly.

CHAPTER 22

A PARISIAN

On my initial trip to Paris I met with a Frenchman who could speak English. This fine-looking gentleman, an ex-soldier and now manufacturer of French automatic machine guns, attracted to my American uniform, no doubt, came to my rescue as interpreter and assisted the street car conductor-woman in transacting our business interests which involved the huge sum of a penny and a half.

We fell to conversation and later came up for air at the station La Concorde. I looked upon Paris for the first time on this occasion and my companion sought my immediate impression. I gazed upon the uniform buildings, the large Place de la Concorde with the Obelisque in the immediate foreground and then across the River Seine to the Chambres des Deputes.

I gave my friend an enthusiastic answer which pleased him. He was a Parisian—he loved Paris and was proud of his beloved city, this I could see. We walked over the large square to the River Seine, caught a car and later come upon the *Tour Eiffel*. An improvised wooden fence surrounded the giant steel structure and sentries paced their beats in military fashion. All strangers were kept away and the French military authorities guarded their wireless station with jealous care.

From the tower we recrossed the Seine and

passed thru the scenic and beautiful grounds of the Trocadero Palace and a few minutes later came upon the Arc de Triomphe; then a brisk walk along the Champs-Elysees brot us back to the city proper. I was somewhat uneasy without a pass, but being busily engaged with an authoritative Frenchman and apparently upon serious business the M. P. gave me no attention.

We talked about many things: War, politics, economics and foreign relationships and even ventured upon delicate ground—religion. My friend lauded President Wilson and gave me to understand that all France worshiped our great statesman.

We paused, in our walk, to enter the Madeleine, the beautiful Catholic cathedral. Passing some beggars we mounted the long flight of stairs and stood at the entrance a moment. Within I noticed that my friend passed the holy water, nor did he perform the usual ceremony peculiar to every devout Catholic. It was later that we fell to discussing Masonry and the ancient wisdom in its new forms.

At length my friend invited me to his home at St. Denis, and to partake of a meal and meet his aged mother and a brother. I reluctantly accepted not wishing to intrude, but he insisted and argued that he wanted to entertain an American soldier. We walked down the Boulevard des Capucnes and later disappeared into the ground at la Opera preparatory to taking the Metro.

A half hour later we mounted the stairs of a fashionable French apartment house in St. Denis.

The mother answered a bell and was pleasantly surprised to meet an American soldier. A brother came forward and our circle was complete. The apartments were small but well appointed and seemed real cozy.

We sat before the table, a bit later, and the mother devotedly served her two fine sons and myself—she would not tolerate a servant was explained—and we were served in several courses. An empty plate, knife, fork and spoons, a half-loaf bread, glass tumbler and napkin met my eyes. Yes, wine was to be served; wine, the beverage consumed by the high and low alike.

The little mother brot from a small kitchenette an omelet with onions. She retired and we began, without grace, in honor of a vigorous appetite. The egg and onion and French bread were keenly appreciated—any soldier will tell you so.

Next we were served a thick beefsteak. Army rations had served to create a carnivorous appetite and so I ate the steak and made short order of the bread. My friend poured wine. One glass, another glass; not more for the product was rare, it was explained, and extra fine and should not be gulped down but lightly sipped and lingered over. The steak finished we were served, again, by the untiring faithful mother-servant, cheese and more bread. This concluded the meal, and my appetite was fully appeased.

The time was slipping and I prepared to depart for the Fort. The small double-decked Stains car stopped its service at seven and I faced a good

walk home. The boys offered to walk with me and so, after saying farewell and offering many, many thanks and *merci* to the fair old lady, we departed and swung along the boulevards of St. Denis, passing into the country road and later reaching Stains.

Our conversation was varied and I came to understand many things of the French people. We parted in regular French fashion, kisses omitted, and I regained my lodging all tired and a bit weary. I was thankful, however, for having seen Paris under such splendid conditions and of gaining the acquaintance of a Parisian.

CHAPTER 23

PARIS—THE PAGEANT CITY

The following Sunday I visited Paris again. This time I held a genuine piece of paper, sometimes called a pass, which was okayed by a white-haired sergeant down at the army headquarters, Rue St. Anne near the Louvre. Many spies and A. W. O. L.'s (absent without leave) paraded the streets of the big city; for this reason every citizen and lawful visitor was required to carry his credentials. All day long I passed the M. P. with my chin in the air.

My business having been transacted at St. Anne Headquarters I stood upon the street curb debating what I should do next. I hailed a taxi and shouted to a red-nosed driver, "Notre Dame." We went sailing along the boulevards passing hundreds of taxies coming, going, crossing and dodging people and carts alike.

Notre Dame stands upon the banks of the River Seine. I refer you to "The Hunchback of Notre Dame"—by Victor Hugo for description. I fain would attempt to depict the physical features of this huge ancient structure. When I came upon the scene the war was at its height. And so for protection the authorities had sandbagged the priceless statuary about the cathedral.

Big Bertha, the German monster 74 miles away, had her eyes on this sacred edifice. As far as I am aware the historic structure has escaped unscathed.

I entered the sub-door and stood upon the cement floor amid ancient memories. It was Sunday and services were in progress. Music filled the great halls and echoed and re-echoed from the lofty ceilings. I knelt a moment before the Allied flags and then joined in the curious crowd which promenaded to and fro about the outer halls. An arrangement of fences held the congregation within bounds and the services were conducted and continued much the same as a performance upon a stage with the walking sight-seers as audience.

Upwards to twenty priests sat in a row near the choir. One elevated seat was occupied by the All High or someone wearing a mitre and dress of extra color and design, and it was a novel sight to watch the curious peek thru the pannels at the whole show. It was distasteful. But I appreciated the music and departed later somewhat uplifted.

Outside I hailed another taxi and this time we crost the Seine and stopt at the Esplanade des Invalides. Napoleon's tomb was also sandbagged. In a large adjacent building there were many war relics; German artillery of all caliber, airplanes, tanks and other war accessories, all being trophies of the Great War.

Guynemeyer's faithful Spad was on exhibition. Not the plane he succumbed in, but his favorite machine which had served in many an air-battle. There were wreaths thrown over the propeller and hanging upon the wings. Guynemeyer, the first Ace of Aces, is almost worshiped by the French; his memory will live forever. In all the

prominent photograph galleries a large-sized likeness of this Ace was displayed—a mere chap, too.

That afternoon I sat in a sidewalk cafe and involuntarily began counting the colors and combinations of the Allied Nations' soldiers who were parading in the Sunday afternoon crowds. There were red pants and black stripes, black pants and red stripes, green caps, purple caps, red caps all done up in gold braid. There were corset-fitting coats and loose coats, high boots and low boots, wide belts and narrow belts, fancy canes and silver spurs.

There was the characteristic blue of the French, greenish-gray of the Italian, brilliant brown of the Belgium, with a tassel on the cap for ornament. Natives of French Algeria wore their red fezes—the Hindoo a turban. English, Australian, Canadian and American were in khaki.

I cannot imagine a time in the future when such a gathering of military peoples and color and costume will again occur.

Everyone drank. The characteristic sidewalk cafe did a booming business. It is a custom of the French to drop in on a sidewalk cafe and be served with wine or liquor. A Frenchman will sit for hours over a glass of wine, gazing at the passers-by and watching the ever ending procession of humans. The American soldiers joined in the galaxy of Paris life and were served wine in quantity.

Now wherever there is wine served you will find also the pretty mademoiselle; the two have been inseparable since the beginning of time. An Aus-

tralian chap, Taylor by name, and I were rudely made aware of this fact. We walked down the boulevard mindful of our own business. Two French girls intercept our passage—they are coming down the sidewalk. We make a graceful detour but are not allowed to escape. They throw themselves upon us. We are abashed, at first, then come to on the “recoil.” Wine is upon their breath and—“*vous promenade?*” No, we are not prepared to promenade and explain the reason in broken French.

At the street corner one girl dropt a slipper. She hesitates, she attempts to replace the shoe and, not succeeding, curses a nearby cabman. Her dress is high and her temper is high and Taylor and I escape.

They were young and gay and many others alike there were who fell upon the soldier. Down on Victoria street the soldier threw away *beaucoup francs*. Once in camp the boys would search their jeans and not finding their hard-earned money would turn to the pretty mademoiselle of yesterday and curse the vampire of today.

The military authorities have done every thing possible to stamp out or minimize the social evil and prophylactic stations are established everywhere to treat the unfortunate ones who fall by the wayside.

There is an army aphorism: “The army makes or breaks a man.” In France where wine and

women are in abundance this is hideously true and one can quite understand the fight the average man must make.

The first "baptism of fire" was back at the training camp.

CHAPTER 24

JUST GIRLS

The first weeks at Fort de Stains found several of our boys well established in different family households about the small villages. I have one member of our Battery in mind, especially. A pretty daughter of a Perrifeitte family was the object of our friend's attention. The match was agreeable to the parents tho the daughter was not allowed from sight.

Nearly every evening you could find our two young lovers conversing upon the front porch. No doubt the little girl had visions of sailing for America *apres la guerre*—a bride and happy. But, alas! this did not come to pass.

When our Battery entrained for the Front many lonely hearts were left behind. Two pretty maidens, especially, I have in mind and it was with great reluctance that our American lovers gave me a copy of the two following letters:

Paris, October 1, 1918.

Dear Arthur,

I am ennoyed, there is a long time I have not received novels of you. I am hoping, however, you are always in good health. Would you have left your old camp, would you be on the front and could you not write me as often as you want, that will be possible, and in this case I forgive you.

But if you are a lazy boy, I shall do as you, and I shall not write at all.

My friend Alice is always at Rochefort-en-Yvelines, but she must be back next week.

In this moment at Paris we are quiet, we have not Gothas or Bertha. I am hoping that will be continue yet a long time.

In this minute we have a very fine weather but it is cold, winter is approaching.

I often think to the last afternoon we passed together in the beautiful park of Rochefort; I shall want to be here yet, but I am hoping I shall see you in a few time at Paris, for your next permission.

Have you received, indeed, novels of your family? if no your must be very ennoyed.

Now I am going to leave you, for I am going to take a walk.

I tenderly kiss you,

Jane.

P. S. Be quick to answer me.

Extracts from others.

(a) My letter will be not long today, I am tired, I have not sleep since two nights; last night we had a terrible storm on Paris, and the night before yesterday the visit of German avion who threw shells very near our house.

(b) P. S. Be indulgent, for, I do not know if you always understand the signification of my phrases.

(c) This morning a German avion came on Paris, but he has been pursued; I was all the same a little afraid.

Paris the 5th of November, 1918.

My dear Clarence:

Today I have receive your little letter it has make me very pleasure. Sometimes I have think to you and asked if perhaps you are always in good health as I know that you were start at front indeed I have no receive this morning is date of the 15 the October. I congratulate your Battery whom has cost down two Germans aeroplanes and I think that your victory does not stop there now the Germans are conquered and we must the victory at your dear Americans came from so far for safeguard our french ground. I have no see your friend Joseph and he has no write to me. How make it that he is no at front say me when you think come in leave, above all when you write come at Paris forgot no seeing me.

My mother brother and my friend Madame Cadou adjoins to me for sent you their best friendship.

Your little friend who think to you,

Georgette.

P. S. Write me quickly a long letter for say me if I shall see you soon.

CHAPTER 25

ST. DENIS OF OLD

St. Denis was put on the local pass-list two weeks after our arrival at Fort de Stains. Colonel Collins, commanding officer of the Fort, was willing to expand the limits to accomodate the boys. He wanted to give them every opportunity, both for pleasure and education.

Now there happened to be objectionable pleasures about the town of St. Denis. There was wine; there were lewd women. So Col. Collins one evening mounted the stump and gave the entire enlisted personnel under his command (600 men) an impromptu speech about conditions, after which he appealed to the better natures of the men. Told them they represented Free America; that they must uphold the sacred traditions of the country and present a clean manly appearance to the community; that they should wear their uniforms with pride and honor.

The boys responded splendidly and the Colonel finished his timely heart to heart talk by saying, "When the war is over and we sail home victoriously let us return to mothers, fathers, wives and sweethearts clean—and better men. You stand dismissed." The boys fairly sang out in deep resolution as each and every one raised the right hand in affirmation.

So to St. Denis the boys went. It's an old city

—very old. The public buildings are all sadly in need of repair. The streets are narrow and crooked and filthy. There is always a peculiar odor present, a combination of low hanging smoke from the numerous factories, the manure upon the streets, the sour liquors from the numerous saloons, the mixed garbage upon the sidewalks and, worst of all, the public street latrines. The whole of this makes an unaccustomed visitor nauseated.

The various restaurants did a good soldier business. The French are artists of the *cuisine* but are O! so slow. We sat and sat impatiently for our meals and then when we ordered a new obstacle presented itself—we could not interpret the *menu*. So we would revert to the ancient means of communication and make our wants known in hand, arm and shoulder signs, combined, like the French. Then, if not successful, we ordered *des oeufs*, *pome-de-terre* and *cafe* (eggs-potatoes-coffee) which we found in our French-American dictionaries. Most of the boys ordered *des oeufs*—to pronounce just grunt. I heard many grunts.

Luckily, or otherwise, there happened to be an English cafe in town near the City Hall and across the street from the famous Notre Dame of St. Denis. But prices were high and our visits rare. After pay-day you could count many customers in American uniform from our Fort partaking of meat and wine in quantity at this cafe and our good Englishman and wife were careful to offer their best.

Upstairs was a large parlor with piano and easy

seats. On one occasion, with a violin under arm which I had purchased the same day, I came to dine. The Englishman, who had a good eye for business, pounced upon me and before I knew it I was "sawing" away on my fiddle while his wife "tickled the ivories." Steller sang on this occasion.

Sergeant Miller was there and Cook and "Calamity" Donley and others of our Battery. Some one had treated for upon the long center table were many "empties" and several yet to drain. Then also I saw a long fancy box of Melachrinos open and half gone. Amid the smoke and music and under the influence of wine the audience—for there were others from the Fort present—reclined in the easy chairs and, with legs crost and gaze to the ceiling, would rattle their francs and rest in perfect bliss and contentment unmindful of war and strife. Later the meal claimed many precious francs and the boys would return to camp with visions of another spread the following pay-day.

Across the street is the St. Denis cathedral wherein lie the remains of the French royal family. Coronations, marriages and momentous state events have been performed beneath the lofty arched canopy of the cathedral. In hidden labyrinths rest the priestly paraphernalia and in the archives are parchments, rare and sacred.

A party of several soldiers was conducted thru the ancient structure and I enjoyed the visit perhaps more than on the occasion of my visit to Notre Dame, Paris. It was under different cir-

cumstances and we reverently held our otherwise noisy inquisitive ejaculations in reserve.

On another occasion in St. Denis I met with our gang and we traveled *en masse*. Up Cat Alley we went cheering and stepping about. Some Frenchmen were celebrating the Chateau-Thierry victory and proceeded to make us their object of reverence.

"Curly" Best was loud and lively and held converse with the women who happened to be at the open windows. Mathews, in a sudden outburst of enthusiasm, sprang upon a window and went up and up, hand over hand on an adjacent waterpipe. On a second story window he paused to "*parlez vous Francais*" with a French girl. Up and down the alley the townspeople were attracted and the crowd gathered. "Matty" remained suspended as if in mid-air and the sight was a novel one—a regular Romeo-Juliet done up in Cat Alley. The whole affair was done in jest and soon Mathews rejoined the crowd and the gang stepped forward.

An old man put out a hand. I offered mine. He kissed it. The French were wild over the Americans then. I hope there is still some semblance of friendship lingering within the hearts of the peoples at large in spite of the many, many clashes, unfair dealing and foul play which threaten those concerned. Of course the Great Abstract National Friendship, which the French naturally must hold, will never die. Likewise with the American. However a combination of events have unfortunately made a majority of the lads bitter towards the French.

Few men will return home with their earnings, for the French have "cleaned us out." Crafty grogshop keepers, especially, have profited. Then the women, the storekeepers and the rest, all after the mighty franc, plied their trade ruthlessly. Yes, the French early found our weakness; our inability to save; our ready careless spending.

On the other hand many misunderstandings have arisen between the French and the American soldiers. "Dam Frog" you hear on all sides. The French soldier is known universally as a "Frog." Beautiful tributes in journals and books speak of the Poilu but, dear reader, bear with me for I tell the truth, I would not profit otherwise, to the rank and file they were just "Frogs."

I have never heard the more fitting name in the ranks, only from YMCA platforms and thru the lips of our chaplains.

Human nature is much the same the world over and I suppose if the French had come to America our peoples would have played upon their pocket-books and our questionable women chain them down with the wages of sin in much the same manner.

Sunday morning is a busy day in the public markets at St. Denis. You can purchase anything; things to eat, things to wear, jewelry, knick-knack and what-not.

Over at a butcher's stall there are rabbits and chickens, filled with the breath of life. You pet a rabbit gently then order it slaughtered. The butcher takes the timid, harmless animal by the

hind legs and then, while you watch the performance, gives the poor dumb animal a vigorous swing, like crack-the-whip, and snaps its neck. He then hangs the quivering carcass upon a couple of pegs and proceeds to rip, cut and splatter blood. The dead flesh is soon prepared for delivery and our customer goes about his shopping as unconcerned as a Golden Oriole singing a morning song from the top of a fruit-laden tree.

At the next counter you purchase fruit or dairy products. Then further down the crowded aisle are shoes for sale—leather and wooden. Cheap lace, perfume, scented soap, flowers for your grave at the cemetery and your fortune told; the whole of it making an interesting sight.

There are thousands upon thousands of street vendors in St. Denis and Paris. They sell everything—even small bundles of wood for the fireplace at twenty centimes per bundle. These hand carts line the curbs for blocks and interfere with the traffic upon the already narrow streets.

From La Bourge into Paris there is an exceptionally broad avenue. Upon this boulevard there can be found, on Sunday morning especially, the greatest conglomerate mass of goods and humans that one can imagine. Under awnings and upon the sidewalks you would think the world's business was being conducted.

CHAPTER 26

EIGHT HUNDRED, B. C.

The small village of Stains is near the Fort. The church in this town is very old, built about eight hundred, B. C. Every French village, however small, is graced by at least one Catholic church.

Now just across the street from the Stains' church is the public latrine. Customers using it are hidden from public gaze from about the waist line to the knees. In Stains the street-sweepers are negligent and the manure is allowed to accumulate in the streets; garbage is thrown carelessly about by hungry dogs and willful children; then the rain falls making the whole scene unsightly and "smelly."

To enter the town you must take the cobblestone road. There are sidewalks here and there, all very narrow and irregular, so the average pedestrian trails down the middle of the street. There is a turn here and a crook there, then a corner projects rudely into the street making a very narrow passage. If you pass you find a large square just beyond and then almost circling back upon itself is another branch of the same street you started on. Thru hallways, arches, corridors, passages one is required to pass and if you are not careful you will unconsciously walk into the private yard of your neighbor.

The French are erratic builders. The geography

EIGHT HUNDRED, B. C.

of all the French towns is always a puzzle and their houses are impossible. One would imagine that a cyclone had recently passed leaving the once orderly and well placed houses a jumbled mass. You never know just where the entrance is; whether it leads into a barn, an open lot or into the neighboring street.

One store will dispense goods in the front half; another in the rear. Often I have bolted right into a peaceful family gathering at meal time. The proprietor waves his family aside, usually, and comes to serve you and sometimes you will notice a chicken strutting about the kitchen hard by. There is a barn-yard odor, too, but you buy and then leave, thankful for having gained the free air once more.

Now every French village is alike—all crooked and dilapidated and odoriferously foul, with a single church tower well in evidence. Paris and the large cities are modern in their stores, business and administration and I would not have the reader be confused in my remarks.

The people of the country are the direct antitheses of the Parisians. In Paris you find the world's fashions; in the country, no fashions at all. The women are apparently very careless and in the morning, before they dress to go out, they are sloven and unkempt.

I have in mind the village of Ecruves, near Toul. Here you see village life at its worst. There is a common pump and trough where the villagers come to do their laundry or draw water for household

purposes; where horses come to drink and children splash and play.

One day I observed an unusual gathering at this village trough. Five women were doing their laundry; two horses came to drink; a butcher, hard by, came for water using a bucket stained with fresh blood; a soldier, who had been shaving near by, came to wash away the soap and hair from his shaving outfit. Without interruption the five women continued to laundry.

The women were poorly yet abundantly dressed. One lady of extra weight seemed to be boss of the gang. She always stood nearby or was blocking the middle of the street. Her shoes were wooden and her head may have been of the same material, or empty for it made considerable noise. A string from button-hole to button supported her dress and I fain would look when she stooped, which she never did. Her nose was red, her cheeks flabby and an ugly tooth hung suspended from an otherwise toothless mouth.

Her children—I take it that they were as she ordered them about—answered the call of nature in the public street just as unconcerned as you please. Nearby at a triangular corner there was a manure pile and the street seemed not to have been swept since the days of Noah, or thereabouts.

CHAPTER 27

FINAL PREPARATIONS

At last the day came. The order to proceed to the Front was soon relayed thru our whole Battalion—to the Front. A certain joy animated the ranks and we were glad to be on our way. Had not we been in training for more than a year? And did not we dream and dream day after day of the final move which would put us into the fighting line?

The boys set their jaws, held a firm lip and looked resolutely into the future. I did not notice one iota of unmanly cowardice among them, rather the boys were true to their calling, they were Uncle Sam's soldiers.

Our nine weeks final training under the masterly guidance of Lieut. Emerick had done wonders for us. Battery B was his pride and when at last it became certain that the Lieutenant would not accompany the Battery to the Front he was heart-broken. It was on Saturday that he gave us a final inspection. This man faced each soldier in the ranks, while inspecting, and sought our eyes. He gazed into our souls; he asked that we look him squarely in the eye. What had we to be ashamed of? And were we not men? So we met his gaze—a serene and steadfast gaze—and it was refreshing.

Immediately after inspection Lieut. Emerick asked that we gather together in the barracks so

that he might deliver a few farewell remarks. We gathered; he stood before us. There was a profound silence and we noticed that the Lieutenant was gazing at the floor and lightly tapping his pencil on a nearby bunk. A tear stole into his eye; he made an effort to speak but could not. His heart was full and he wanted to give us all, he wanted to share with us his innermost thots. We gulped, we breathed lightly and then, in the midst of overpowering emotions, our beloved Lieutenant, unable to hold out longer, made his way thru the throng without uttering a word.

Later we learned that he had thrown himself upon his bunk and had wept till his heart was fairly shattered. Yes, reader, he was a soldier; he would have gone into the jaws of death if needs be for us and his country. This he would have done and because he possessed the finer qualities of manhood he would have sacrificed all without thot of self.

Corporal Blanky, who, among other things, was a poet, composed the following ode, a lyric song that played upon the heart-strings of every man, rough and ready tho he may have been:

The boys of Battery B are sad
Because they've lost a friend;
One who knows the part a man must play
And plays it to the end.
Lieutenant Emerick is his name,
A name we proudly scan;
The reason we're so proud of him
Is because—he is a man.

But some day he'll return to us
To lead us in the fray,
And our best wishes go with him
In remembrance while he's away.
Tho we do our best,
We cannot give one-half the credit due;
We can only say in our poor way,
The Battery's proud of YOU.

Lieutenant Clair A. P. Duffie (later Captain) was assigned to our Battery as commander. We were sorry to loose our friend, but were willing to pull together with our new leader whom we soon found to be one with us. He was rough and ready, had seen service at the Front and was altogether worth trusting. Lieut. Emerick was a teacher as well as a leader of men and, with an excellent bearing, could emphasize his remarks with decided firmness. Lieut. Duffie had his ideas of the game well enough, but he found it necessary to revert to slang and not altogether fitting expressions. However many of our boys felt at home under the new "management" and settled down to happy thots of "gettin' by."

On September 4th we departed from our old stamping grounds. As we paraded out thru the 100 foot tunnel we felt a new emotion and realized that we were on the last lap of our journey.

We carried the full pack with one new addition: the gas mask. Each individual had been issued a mask and we had spent many hours in gas drill.

Our lusty army Springfield was well oiled and ready for business. Hob-nailed clumsy shoes replaced the familiar russet and we now wore the overseas service cap, otherwise our costume was the same as when we left the states.

The Battalion marched out thru the indented road, past the *vin rouge* shop and then, after skirting the small city of Stains, finally reached the railroad station of Perrifeitte. Our backs were sorely exercised on this occasion and we were happy when the march was over. French people cheered us on our way and children ran beside our advancing columns begging for souvenirs and chocolate.

The Perrifeitte station was crowded with returning commuters from Paris for it was now the end of a working day, and as we stood at rest nearby awaiting further orders our thots wandered home across the Atlantic.

The sun remained upon the horizon a moment and then disappeared. Darkness quickly settled upon the village and we saw the home-like gleaming of a hundred lamps. It seemed that home was near. We could almost reach out and touch our loved ones who were patiently waiting in dear old California.

"O! mate, O! friend won't you come and whisper to me? Won't you give me a word of courage? Won't you help curb this home-sickness?"

It was the some-like spirit of the returning workers that started these thots, perhaps, or was it the suspense prior to arriving on the Front, or

both? The mingled emotions of many men shone upon their countenances which were accentuated in the purple rays of a dying sun. In the twilight of the fleeting day our men came to know themselves as never before.

The villagers stood about in groups. Perhaps the instinct of self-preservation prompted them to cling to each other. The war-like spirit was in the air. Hundreds of khaki-clad youths, armed to the teeth, greeted their wondering gaze at every turn. Thundering motor-cars carrying provisions and supplies came and went. Officers were shouting orders to their men. Soon we would be gone, these hundreds of men and dozens of gasoline monsters. Soon there would return a quiet village atmosphere and beside every fireplace our French brethren would converse in future terms of American bravery and American victory. This we could see in the quivering voices of men and women as they attempted to cheer us and encourage us in the task of a near future.

A touch of agony flitted across the brow of a widow, nearby, as she stood with her hands clasped upon her breast. Would these men of America face the Hun and drive him back in defeat and disorder that this widow might be avenged? Would that she could see the hand-writing on the wall and know that her husband had not died in vain.

Darkness crept over the land. A bugle call resounded thru the evening shadows and quickly the men came to attention. Orders came to entrain immediately. The long freight train in the yards received its human baggage.

This was our first experience in freight-cars. Upon the dors of these box-cars was stenciled the following: 40 *Hommes*—8 *Chevaux*. "Sidedoor Pullmans," the boys quickly nicknamed the cars. Thirty-four men were packed into a very small space which had recently been evacuated by eight horses. This we knew by the evidence left behind.

Sergeant Daniels ordered the car swept and cleaned in the best manner possible. This done our packs were arranged upon the floor for beds, and the provisions of hardtack and corned-beef were stacked in one end of the car.

French box-cars are small; about twenty feet in length and half the size of our modern cars. Within this small space "Pop" Daniels placed his men and that night our sleep was interrupted repeatedly by careless sleepers, especially "Curly" Best who stretched out his long legs and snored with extra vigor. Once settled the men could not move for every inch of space was occupied.

My position was an extremely awkward one; my helmet gouged my back and "Mother" Pelbrough insisted on placing his feet in my face. Few winks did I steal that night and as the train rolled along at a snail's pace I had many hours of wakefulness.

It was during the night hours such as these that the Dear One in America occupied my mind. That night I thot long and hard of the Patient One at home and my heart fairly ached at times in homesickness. And yet we were bound for the Front. We were on an errand that required strength and cheerfulness and fortitude.

CHAPTER 28

WE CRAWL UP TO THE FRONT

Our troop train departed from Perrifeitte on September 4th at 8 p. m. We traveled the two following days thru Coulommiers, Vitry, St. Dizier, Poissons, Sorey and arrived at Toul on the afternoon of the 6th, a distance of two hundred miles. At Vitry we saw the first evidence of the battlefield. It was at this point, on the River Marne, that the Allies drove the Hun hordes back in that historic second battle of the Marne.

Graves were scattered here and there and wrecked buildings in the village nearby were silent proof of war and destruction. Large ten, twelve and sixteen-inch cannon of the railroad type greeted our gaze on every hand. At this point there were numerous war-time activities in troop and food transportation, warehouses under construction as well as important aerial and balloon hangars; all of which dotted the landscape profusely.

The first morning aboard the freight train found us up early and stirring about. Helmets, guns, bayonets and other metallic mattresses, extra feet, pushing and cursing were sufficient reasons to make a beauty sleep objectionable. So we replaced our shoes and stacked our packs in either end of the car leaving the center space free for walking and general exercise of mouth and limb.

Breakfast consisted of corned-beef and hard-tack which was taken under difficulties as the quaint French rolling stock went bouncing forward. Two days and two nights were quite enough to prepare us for initiation into the "Ancient Order of Hobo." At the end of our journey we were thoro-going bums. Our clothes had remained upon our backs thruout the trip, our beards were shaggy, our hair unkempt, in fact water had not been touched by many except to drink.

After passing thru many miles of uninteresting territory we at last reached the railroad terminus at Toul. Lieut. Duffie ordered his company to vacate the cars which we did without regrets. While waiting for further orders the clouds gathered, the rain came and then, to avoid a good drenching, everyone found shelter in the cars we had so lately deserted. It continued to rain, tho in a lesser degree, thruout the afternoon. In this rain we finally assembled and then marched two miles to our French barracks for the night.

Thru the village streets we swung, passed the city gate, mounted an ascending roadway, skirted several large rain puddles and finally, after much labor and fatigue, we reached our quarters where we remained one night. Everyone prepared a bunk in the semi-darkness. Owing to the German night-raiders, who had recently made trouble for the residents of Toul, all lights were taboo.

The cooks prepared a scant supper which we ate with relish because it was hot and later all turned in for the night, tired and sleepy, and were

soon lost to the material world. Next morning the sun came forth in all its splendor which was well for it gave us an opportunity to wash a few pieces of clothing. Then we shaved and later re-rolled our packs making ready for orders to proceed on our journey.

During the day the boys were informed that a final troop movement would probably take place soon and sure enough in the afternoon word was passed that trucks would be on hand to take our Battalion up to the Front that very evening. The boys were elated. They sang. I can now see the fellows gathered around the quartette of Ginn, Ingram, Fleck and Steiler singing to their heart's content.

What a contrast the present moment was to that of yesterday when the boys had dragged themselves thru the rain all tired and wet and homesick. Long before the time of departure everyone was ready. Packs had been made over and dispensable articles were discarded. We now learned to carry only essentials.

At four supper was served and it was good "eats," considering. A detail was called afterwards to pack up the stoves and cooking utensils. Other details were made up from the Battery to handle baggage, supplies and to police the barracks later. This was done thoroly as was always our Lieutenant's wonted custom and it gained for us a reputation of cleanliness. No matter how disorderly and filthy a place might have been we always left it spick and span, tho the boys oft times did their work grudgingly, I'll admit.

At six o'clock the trucks arrived manned by Frenchmen. It was the Black Cat Squad, I believe, for on each motor-truck was painted the emblem of the quad, that of a black cat with curved back and erect tail as tho a dog were nearby ready to spring into action. Twenty men were assigned to each truck, including packs, and it was sardine-packed affair, to say the least. Our goal had, up to the present, been a mystery.

Lieutenant Duffie called the sergeants together and whispered the word—ANSAUVILLE. They, in turn, passed the coveted word along the ranks. We were given the location in the event of our being scattered by shell-fire, truck accident or otherwise.

At dusk we crawled out of the five acre drill grounds that encircles the barracks, pointed our noses in a northerly direction and cautiously yet with dashing thunder rolled thru the little village of Toul and later were winding thru the slight hills of the back country. Into the crucible of war we were going. Every turn of the wheel brot us nearer. The boys were firm and brave and I heard no complaints.

On the road we passed marching columns of artillery. The rattle of chains and of horses' hoofs upon the highway, intermingled with the roaring engine of our Quad trucks brot a strange admixture of emotions. Not a light was allowed in the ranks, such as the striking of matches. The drivers flashed their headlights occasionally for proper guidance and to avoid a general smash-up at a

dangerous curve. But they were cautious and later the roads were camouflaged in the exposed heights which was some measure of protection from enemy eyes.

There was a general shouting from the trailing cannoneers and horsemen who trudged along with their artillery. "What outfit?"—comes ringing in my ears to this day. We were cautioned not to impart military secrets, especially that pertaining to troop movements. In reply the boys answered "YMCA emplacements," "coffee coolers," "23rd Infantry" and all sorts of nonsense.

While in motion we clung to our equipment and rifle. Our cartridge belts were loaded to overflowing and were ready for any emergency. We knew not our final disposition, whether we would be called upon to assist our brother infantryman or settle in a prepared gun-pit; whether we would face immediate battle or engage in guard duty near the front lines. All this was mere speculation and our own judgment was our only authority. Long since had we learned to discount all rumors and to live by the watch, to test each report in the laboratory of finer senses—intuition. Even Lieut. Duffie was ignorant of his future movements beyond Ansauville.

At 11:30 p. m. our trucks slipped into the small village street and stopped. All was rigid blackness and we could hear much activity about us tho our eyes were blinded. The surroundings were strange, the people were strange and we seemed strange to one another. Under trying emotions and

amid a myriad of visions we came to a strange cross-road in life. Were we dreaming? Was our position on the Front real? And, were we really on the Front?

True we could not see beyond the length of our arm the darkness was so heavy, but we could hear much. For instance there were intermittent peels of thunder yonder; illuminated patches in the night sky appeared, then disappeared; narrow gauge railroading was very near at hand; trucks were coming and going. Was it a dream?

Our Lieutenant was quick to find a location. In a huge hayloft we crawled that night and, after very little preparation, dug in and went to sleep.

CHAPTER 29

FRONT LINE SPORT

Next morning we were aroused by the pangs of hunger and awoke to a hot steaming breakfast. Cook Steger and staff had, early that morning, set up an improvised kitchen and already rations of food were ready to serve. Crisp bacon, biscuits and jelly, rice and coffee "hit the spot."

Already our busy news agents were afield gathering in a rich harvest of facts and fancies. Rear brot back some real head-liners. Best, Jester, Gullick, Crumrine and Chase all contributed to the central information and gossip bureau.

Steel helmets and gas-masks were our best friends now and the boys were unduly careful with these priceless articles, especially the gas-mask. A gas-shell might have exploded at any moment for Fritz was just over the way ready to send a shell into the least sign of activity.

Our Battery was now separated from the Battalion and in the two months that followed on the Front we worked independently of companies A, C, D and Headquarters. Bits of news came to us during the two months but we knew very little of each other in an intimate way.

The small village of Ansauville was in ruins. Wicked shells from German guns had wrought death and destruction many months before our arrival. The only church was partially in ruins, one

shell having penetrated and destroyed the clock tower. In spite of the wanton destruction several families lived on in their miserable surroundings. In fact the very premises our Lieutenant decided to occupy was still in possession of its owner, an old gray-haired lady.

But a final warning from General Headquarters urged all citizens to retire to the rear immediately and so our old lady prepared to leave. She was all alone. Where her husband was or her sons and daughters, no one knew. All we could see was a pathetic figure roaming about the premises looking blankly at the strange works of man.

Our kitchen force took possession of the old lady's kitchen and transformed the old-fashioned fireplace into a modern field-range. Then the rabbit pens and chicken coops were removed from the adjoining room together with a debris of long standing and of special odor.

The French have a great amplitude for accommodating their domestic friends within the four walls of their habitats. In the next room our friend Mr. Pig was at home and next came Mr. Horse or horses. Above was the hayloft. So with our kitchen duly installed and a good soft bed with a roof over all we settled down to a real home-life together.

And we were at home 'neath the balmy summer sky of France. During the day the boys were unmindful of Fritzie who was on the lookout just two and a half miles beyond the village. Fuller, even whistled capriciously thru the soft afternoon

beneath the shade of a friendly eucalyptus. He should worry about coming events; this was his attitude, which was well for it afforded us a valuable lesson in faith and a grounded trust in the powers that be.

September 8-9-10-11 passed rapidly. During these days we saw much evidence that led us to believe a pending battle was near. So balanced were our forces, it seemed, that the slightest pretext would have precipitated a herculean cyclone with power that naught could stay. Ammunition dumps were filled to overflowing; the last rails of a broad-gauge railway system were being rushed into position to admit the large calibered naval guns which were now far in the rear; small artillery covered the Front and in some places were wheel to wheel for miles; signal corps men were stringing their final connections; and the first-aid stations were being erected and equipped and ambulance corps men were working night and day to prepare for coming events.

Other than a short drill period on a nearby French Seventy-Five each day, our duties were few. There were no outside formations and we were cautioned to remain under shelter wherever possible. Paradoxical as it may seem, we were on a vacation. In the hayloft the boys took their daily forty winks. Three good meals a day were served. No reveille, no retreat, no formations. In fact the time was our own. What a change from the rigid rules back at the training camp. We were expected to keep in close proximity, however, to answer an unexpected call.

During the first day we acquainted ourselves with the general topography of the land and the geographical centers. We discovered, among other things, that our front line was only six kilometers away to the north. But we were inquisitive and would stand for hours upon an elevated spot straining every muscle trying to see Fritzies. We could see the demarkation in the lines; curling smoke on a mountain yonder; enemy observation balloons and scouting airplanes.

Great excitement pervaded our ranks the first morning when it was discovered that an aerial battle was in progress. A German Fokker, darting between the white puffs of anti-aircraft fire, attempted to burn our nearby balloon when he was attacked by an American flying a Spad. At this point three German planes came to the rescue as did also three American planes. The general melee was characteristic of a parlor aquarium scene, the planes diving in the air much the same as goldfish in water. So close were the contestants to each other that it seemed they would all fall in a general collision. Darting in and out, looping, side-slipping, nose-diving amid the rat-tat-tat of machine guns made the whole spectacle thrilling to a high degree. The boys called it "sport."

From our point of vantage we could plainly see the struggle. A plane is seen to side-slip, turn into a tail-spin never to right itself again. At sight of their falling comrade the planes separated and darted to their respective lines. The boys were divided in their opinion as to who fell, German or American.

This was our first lesson in real aerial work. Later in the day our nearest observation balloon was sent earthward in flames by an attacking Boche. The observer jumped in the nick of time for the burning gas-bag fell within a few feet of the frail silken parachute in its downward flight. "Wasn't this the height of sport?" Kid Thompson inquired.

So all thru the day the enemy made attempts to pierce the eyes of the army—the observation balloons and scouting planes—and it is not revealing a secret to state that the Americans believed in reciprocity.

Next day it rained and continued to do so thru the 9th 10th and 11th. The climatic condition was excellent camouflage for final preparations. Amid great activity, yet inactive within our own Battery, we lived, moved and had our being.

CHAPTER 30

BATTLE OF ST. MIHIEL

The pictorial panorama of the impending battle at length passed in review. On the eve of battle we were cautioned to retire fully dressed and a strange foreboding gripped our souls as we fell into a restless slumber.

At a late hour the rain had ceased falling and now thru an occasional rift in the fleeting clouds the stars shone in all their brilliance. It would seem that mighty Providence had entered into partnership with the Commanding General, repressing the elements and making ready the way for the first all-American drive and victory.

In the hayloft all was peace. The men were apparently in deep slumber when, at the stroke of one, the flood-gates of hell opened and every man sprang to his feet in unison. The combined thunder of artillery fire—the greatest concentration of fire the world has ever witnessed—shook the foundations of the earth. It seemed that the combined volcanic and earthquake disturbances since the time of Adam had simultaneously reincarnated for the express purpose of making a massed attack upon mankind.

“As you were,” shouted Sergeant Fleck, “await further orders.” The command was necessary to avoid confusion in the ranks. We searched in the hay for our caps and coats. The night before these

articles had been neatly placed, but in our embarrassment we could not think where. Coherent reasoning was gone.

BANG—a shell exploded near the entrance of our barnhouse, it seemed. BANG, BANG—two ripping shells tore the air in quick succession. The noise was intense. In another moment Sgt. Fleck shouted, "Proceed to dugouts!" Above the noise little Bortolotto cried out pitifully, "Sgt. Fleck! O, Sgt. Fleck!" He was allowed to follow the sergeant first and we all silently and quickly filed out of the door and made straightway for the dugouts.

Our travel from the barn-door to the dugout, or *abri*, was swift. Out over the landscape many gruesome objects could be seen in the flash of artillery fire. We stumbled into the *abri* and, as Sgt. Fleck called the roll of number one gun-crew, our teeth chattered and knees shook. Try as we did to master our emotions we could not stay the impetuous movement of jaw and limb. "Scribby" cracked a joke and we all laughed. It helped us to recover and find our bearings. We listened to the screaming shells without and studied the interfluent of crash and whistle.

The guns roared. They sang, they cursed. They filled the air with such a deafening and discordant salvo as soldiers seldom have heard since the world began.

The *abri* was damp and water was trickling into a pool in the corner. We were tempted to quench our parched throats but our crowded condition

would not permit of movement. Perhaps we needed a lesson in dynamics, at this point, to help stay our oscillating knees. Ten minutes passed. We regained our equilibrium somewhat.

Lieut. Duffie came to our dugout and asked if all was well. We marveled at his bravery and wondered why he exposed himself unnecessarily. Another ten minutes went by. Again the Lieutenant came. This time he brought glad tidings. "Not a shell is coming our way," he said, "and from all reports Fritz is on the run."

Now that was strange. Did not a shell fall in our midst while we were in transit from barn to *abri*? And did we not see many gruesome sights en route? True, it required some 30 seconds to make the dash but we were certain of our observations.

Out into the flash-light of cannon the men ventured. Our knees were no longer in motion. We could speak to one another more calmly. Directly behind our dugout was a gun emplacement and the cannoneers worked over-time. It was the report of this gun that made us certain that shells were bursting in our midst.

The noise was terrific but the boys argued that greater noise was possible. We glanced up and down the front lines and noted the iridescent flash of artillery fire. Intermittent darkness would settle down upon the lines, but only for an instant, for the momentary lull seemed to stir the illusive salamander into greater activity, and flash and fire, pouring forth, would drench the landscape in

brilliant light, making every nook and corner visible.

Star shells, descending from on high, scattered incandescent white-light upon the battlefield. Its shimmering afterglow would blend into the reddish flash of artillery fire.

And so the fire continued for hours. Later came the steady synchronized harmonized barrage and drum-fire, a multitude of cannon firing as if a single hand were in control. The drum-fire was a prelude to Chopin's funeral march—this the Hun knew and so the spasmodic signals of white-light from the German lines suddenly changed in hue. Instead of the inquisitive flares came colored rockets and star-shells, the lights that call for help. They are a cry in the night, a distress signal, a fireworks that only the German signal corps can comprehend.

Number one gun-crew, in charge of Sgt. Fleck, was ordered to prepare for action. The crew crawled up to an advanced position recently in charge of a French anti-aircraft battery, planted an out-post, wired the position, established communication with the gun-pit and prepared for action. At daybreak it was certain that the Boche would make attempts at aerial observation and possibly day-bombing.

The balance of the company was ordered to stand by. It was a well known fact that in the event of frustration and threatened counter attack we would be ordered to assist the Infantry.

The first excitement was now over. Fleck's crew

was off to duty and the remaining boys of the Battery were either abed or in a nearby field. I walked guard from 2 to 4 and as I paced the narrow path in measured beat my thots drifted back to California. The constant outward thunder produced a strange inward silence and I was one with my thots. I wondered at the peace and quiet of Southern California and asked if some future time would find our Battery home again with our dear ones.

A thousand fancies betook my fervent brain as I wandered back into childhood, youth, manhood and then into the first days of the war. I retraced the old days at the training camp and called to mind the anxious and impatient moments when the boys shouted, "Lead me to them!" Or "Bring on the Germans!" Now it was true—we were on the Front and, at this moment, in the very center of the world's greatest artillery activity.

Giant naval railroad artillery broke the monotony of French Seventy Fives. With a howling twang amid peals of thunder these monster rifles hurled enormous projectiles into space. Death and destruction lay in the wake of every shell. The nearest railroad battery was located a fourth of a mile to our left. Its forward lunge and recoil shook our barn vigorously.

Heavy artillery in the rear sent screaming shells over our heads. Whirl-ez-ez-z-z-z out over the line the shells sped and twenty seconds later a distant thud returned to our impatient ears. And

so the hour passed. Then another, and I was relieved from guard. To sleep was an impossibility so I replaced my equipment, procured my souvenir cane and, with gentility of manner, strode down the village street in true soldier fashion.

The rain had stopped and the clouds were rapidly disappearing. A faint streak of light came from the east. The tanks were under way. And now the doughboy, at the stroke of five, rose from his hated water-soaked trench and went roaring over the top. The Infantry swept across no man's land, across the trenches the Boches had been widening and deepening for four years. In numerous dugouts were found the none too hopeful occupants who were hiding as a result of the tremendous artillery preparation. A well-posted observer could see the operations for miles around. A movie man would have thrilled with joy at the opportunity.

On the Rue la Croix between the village cemetery and the village church, a distance of three blocks—as blocks go in an average American city—I became an itinerant sight-seeker. The morning air was brisk but an army overcoat well buttoned kept the body-heat within bounds.

Out at the cemetery the elevation was good and we grouped about to watch the march of events. Near the church in the center of the small village stood the first-aid stations. Here also we would gather to witness the returning heroes.

The first rays of dawn stole over the landscape at last. It was a relief to our strained eyes and over-abundant inquisitiveness.

The artillery had gradually ceased its activity to allow the Infantry an unchecked advance, and now all was quietness except for an occasional report which would intercept the new found silence.

Over the dell on the highway—the main artery leading up to the Front—we could discern long columns of marching troops. In the semi-darkness khaki-clad men, fully equipped and armed to the teeth, were marching—thousands upon thousands. They came pouring in on all sides. How long this line had been moving we could not judge and only the dawn revealed the secret movement.

At daybreak the areoplanes were on hand and observation balloons were ascending into space. The whirl of the plane was new music to our ears. Like great birds these planes swung out over the front lines and then returned with messages which were dropt on the battery sites.

After an interval of comparative silence the large calibered rifles opened up again. New data had been brot back by the bird-men who had gone to the lines in search of information. The plane returning would descend to earth in spirals, make one dashing sweep and deposit a message in midair which quickly fell, according to the law, upon large white canvases stretched upon the ground for the purpose. The characteristic tail of every message would whirl and spin in the wind, giving the receiving station due warning of the coming areogram.

Soon the aircraft was well in evidence. Allied

planes dominated the situation. Not a German ventured over. Once an American bird-man crost the path of a traveling projectile which had been deflected in its flight by the loss of a rotating band. The collision was tragic—the shooting of a friendly messenger—but we learned later with much relief that the aviator escaped only with severe bruises. At the hospital I talked with the officer personally. His tale was hair-raising.

CHAPTER 31

VICTORY

News of the battle came back to us desultorily. We caught bits of the great story from the returning wounded. Victory was ours—this was certain. The Hun had been taken by complete surprise. Lieut. Duffie, who had gone to the advanced front, returned with a pet phrase: "We caught them with their boots off," he proudly told us.

The St. Mihiel salient—150 square miles—was completely evacuated by the Hun. The awkward "pocket" was now clipped and the line straightened. From the "Stars and Stripes," the official paper for the American Expeditionary Forces (A. E. F.), France, dated Sept. 20th, 1918, we read the following account:

"The First American Army, commanded in the field by General John J. Pershing, struck its first blow last week. * * * The St. Mihiel salient was an ungainly snout projecting from the German line, an area of some 150 square miles, almost half the size of the Chateau-Thierry salient. The Germans had clung to it grimly since the second month of the war, because it held a bit of fair and fertile French land in bondage, because it annihilated a precious French railway junction and thus cut completely the short and easy communication between lonesome Verdun and Lorraine, and because it had proved, and might again prove, useful in any attack on Verdun."

At the receiving hospital we greeted the doughboys. Fresh from action they came with eager eyes and resolute bearing, some legless, others minus an arm, a hand or an eye. Some reached the operating table and then crossed the Great Divide; some passed over en route. But a majority came in with a "scratch"—a finger or so missing or a 3-inch gash in the thigh. Laboring under powerful emotions most of the men failed to grasp the severity of their wounds.

One fellow who had lost a finger gave us a cursory sketch of a recent encounter while he perched stork-like on either leg. He literally danced in pain and yet would not admit it. He would have his story out and he would be brave. "A scratch," he said.

Large supply trucks gathered the slightly wounded, then hurried to the rear. The sight was truly a novel one, the intermixture of khaki and snow-white linen.

Early in the day the first contingent of prisoners came trickling back on their way to safety. For two days a steady stream came down from the north—15,000 in all. They came in groups of fifty, a hundred, two hundred and in every case there were two M. P.'s in charge, one leading, one trailing.

In fact only the cavalry and the airplanes kept pace with the swift doughboys who scarcely bothered to send back their hundreds of Huns, but let them drift back unguarded to be picked up later by the M. P. Imagine a group of American pris-

oners in a like predicament, why! they would have wiped a couple of Boche guards completely out of existence.

The prisoners came in droves, each displaying an incorrigible cheerfulness that would have deeply grieved the war-firm of Ludendorff and Hindenburg. In the first day's bag were several regimental commanders, majors, lieutenant colonels, a battalion complete in staff and script and a bespectacled professor who had invented a poison gas. As is the custom in war-fare, these commissioned gentlemen were motored to the rear, an act of respect for the higher rank. Every attention was given them in the hope that valuable information would fall from their lips.

During the morning two Packards passed our quarters bearing officials who had so recently been overshadowed by the Black Eagle and who were now accompanied by a representative of our Golden Eagle, all conversing in the friendliest sort of fashion.

Towards noon Sgt. Fleck and crew returned to quarters. For obvious reasons each man wore a full-moon face. Each sought to effect a normal facial grin but to conceal the tri-fold emotions of ferocity, amusement and awe, peculiar to Yanks, was an impossibility, hence the lunar lollipops.

"Kid" Thompson and McHenry made a bold attempt to depict all they had seen. Woolaver talked long and loud and gathered his audience quickly. Groups of boys assembled in the field, at the corner pump and in the hayloft, talking

loudly, some gesticulating wildly and the ever-present and inevitable arguments arose ghost-like in our midst.

All thru the days "news agents" came back with "first hand information." There was the energetic "Curly" Best who, tho he talked as if a rope was tightly coiled about the larynx, was a "go-getter." And "Pigeon" Jester knew a thing or two altho Gulick came in for his share and the two boys, professing to embrace latitudinarianism, whatever that means, sought to impinge upon the other fellow his opinions, raw as they sometimes were.

Now Cornelius Cook and "Panhandle" Emerick would engage in some real mental gymnastics and one or the other would submit if bested, but not Gulick! No, sir, and our good friend in making an outlandish statement would cling to the end, or, finding himself hopeless, would revert to howling laughter. In fact, Gulick always talked and laughed in concert and thus would retire, after a brisk argument, to his innermost thots in perfect contentment.

In the company office across the street gathered the "noncoms" and other notables. Our new "Top," "Abe" Nathan, cousin of Kottinger of the tribe of Izy Kazat and chambermaid to Lieut. Duffie, was chief orator and boss. Fritz, our mascot airedale captured from the Germans, added to the brilliance of "Abe's" conferences.

Now, the common herd of privates in the barn would look upon Abe & Co. with envy and scorn.

And the "noncoms" returned their superior gaze in true Napoleonic style and you should see the petty thots bound and rebound upon the wall of demarkation. At times it seemed that the ancient structure of caste privileges would obliterate that finer relationship of man—Brotherhood.

So you see, reader, the condition of affairs on this day of all days when titanic issues should have taken precedence over all other thots and engaged our entire attention. Perhaps the emotions of man play upon our subtler bodies in a very real way and, if so, then we may have joined the seething emotional world and acted upon the psychology of the moment.

Moreover, we were idle and without a definite piece of work at hand. We were ready to fight, to death if needs be, but would insist, in idle moments, upon gossip, abuse and general unbrotherliness. Happily these occasions were few.

CHAPTER 32

KALEIDOSCOPIC DAYS

All thru the day our naval guns hurled hot steel into the distant enemy lines. At noon an aerial battle was in progress. Three Germans came over the lines looking for trouble. Gibson, who had stationed himself in the field nearby, came rushing to the barn and shouted the news. We saw a single Spad coming on. Would this illustrious bird-man dare and do and perhaps die? Our question was soon answered; into the group he darted, and we could hear the rat-tat-tat of machine guns which speaks a well known language. We breathed lightly; we clinched our fists. The odds were great but our resolute warrior finds his mark. A Hun sideslips and falls to earth. Death to one, disorder to two and victory to the indomitable bird-man.

Thru the afternoon thousands of army trucks passed our corner. Ambulances and field-kitchens; food-supply, munitions, troop and auto-trucks came and went in one unending line. Traffic M. P.'s stood at every corner directing the movements. A motorcyclist would stop, draw forth a map, ask a few questions and be off; undue hesitancy would have caused a jam in the on-coming line of vehicles.

At the village church the corps men established a temporary hospital. The Salvation Army was

overflowing with wounded as was also the Y. M. C. A. where hot chocolate and cigarettes were served to deserving men.

The sun finally settled on the western rim of the world and with its passing came the end of a perfect day. Success had attended every effort of the American forces, and by nightfall the German army was many, many miles away.

In the electric hours of Friday morning, the day following, two scouting parties, groping their way cautiously thru the village of Hattonville, came face to face in the street and when it became certain that friend faced friend a general meeting followed. In the joy of union the Yanks grasped each other by the hand as only Yanks can do.

This union completed the new front line running thru Combres—St. Maurice—Hattonville—St. Benoit—Thiaucourt. The last named being some 25 miles southwest of Metz, the objective of the First Army.

Except for Sgt. Fleck's crew, who had worked on a French position a few hours the first morning, our Battery had not participated in actual combat. True, we were on the Front when the floodgate opened and were prepared in an emergency to assist the doughboy, but the Hun had been caught so completely unawares that our services were not required. Besides we were without anti-aircraft equipment and you know that good intentions alone are not enough in modern warfare.

The first morning after the battle a few straggling prisoners passed thru the village. They were

tired, dusty and discouraged and it was evident that they represented remnants of a broken down war-machine and had found shelter within the Allied lines for the night only. The nocturnal vigilance in anxiety and fading hope vanished with a coming day and it required but little skill for the Yanks to clear the occupied territory of all wandering enemy.

Lieut. Duffie and a squad of men started for the Front in an auto-mount borrowed from a French battery but the traffic was so congested that they returned to quarters in discouragement. The boys had hoped to crawl up to the new positions and help wing a Boche or two. This was the 13th.

Next day we spruced up at the village pump. Now water, just plain, ordinary water, was a scarce commodity on the Front. Our only pumping station worked over time. In fact there was such a demand for bathing that we decided to make our acquaintance with the village stream. The thot soon spread thru a baker's dozen or more and off to the old swimming hole we betook ourselves with one lad shouting, "Hie thee hence!"

In a green pasture beyond the creek was camped a brigade of Infantry. Hundreds of lads were busy cleaning their outfits and bathing. They had come thru a stiff campaign and their bodies, once disrobed, evinced the fact.

One fellow, Jim by name, was in bad straits. He had had a bath two weeks previous, a shave once and the only clothes he possessed were on his back. He owned a skimpy towel, a half-used cake

of kitchen soap and a strait razor. Extra clothing had been cast aside to make a lighter pack; toilet soap was impossible to obtain and the razor outfit stolen.

Luckily the sun was shining brightly when Jim began operations. First, a thick crust of dried mud was scraped from his shoes. Then off came leggins, sox, overshirt, breeches and undersuit. Soap, water and "elbow grease" worked wonders and the clean clothing was hung over the bushes for Old Sol to dry.

Next a shave was in order. Where would Jim find the scented shaving cream, the camel-hair shaving brush, hot water, a keen-edged safety, a mirror, the herpicide and talcum? These articles were not to be had, but then an American soldier is very resourceful. Cold water and kitchen soap soon produced a good lather, the finger tips served as a brush and a small pool of water made an excellent reflector. The strait razor, patted over the shoe-top, produced a fairly good edge. The shave over, herpicide and powder were thot of and Jim promised himself an extra helping after the war, back home in dear old U. S. A.

Next came the bath. This over, the skimpy towel, rubbed briskly over the body, gave a healthy glow. Old Sol is a wonderful orb; see—his clothes are dry. Dressing was a cheerful occupation and soon Jim was all "dolloed" up.

"Well, old Kid," Jim shouted over his shoulder as he started campward, "I'm settin' pretty."

On our way back from the swimming hole we

came upon some wandering refugees. The first contingent, the advance guards of hundreds, reached our small village after having been released from bondage by the American forcés. It was fine to witness the greetings that passed between the peasant folk and the soldiers. After the battle was won the old folks and small children came out of their cellars and dugouts, many falling to their knees in prayer and tears of incoherent thanksgiving, the young girls flinging their arms around the embarrassed doughboys and kissing them without reserve, in the name of *Liberty, Egalite and Fraternite*.

As we gazed long and sorrowfully at the groups of refugees who came streaming into the village during the following two days, we were reminded of the snug little homes that nestled 'neath the shadows of our wooded hills in California. The contrast was marked—to see these homeless wanderers, the inevitable product of man-made war. They were victims of circumstances just as our mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters might have been victims of circumstances

The sight was enough to fire the emotions of a fighting Yank and I heard many remarks that might have otherwise remained unsaid. "And all because one man had ambition," Sgt. Gilbert often repeated.

"A beast, a child-murderer, the greatest vampire-ghoul of all ages," came from a man who is a man, a lover of children and a minister of the gospel.

On this same afternoon our good old lady, owner of our quarters, returned to her cherished home. This time she was accompanied by her son, a strong honest-looking middle-aged man who had worked in the fields under German rule for eight centimes per hour ($1\frac{3}{4}$ cents). Cook Steger invited the two to be our special guests and at the supper table in the kitchen these two hungry souls munched long and loud. Truly it was a time of thanksgiving for them. Later I noticed that our land-lady had discovered the missing rabbit and pig pens. I have no doubt that the time of rejoicing far overshadowed her domestic troubles.

Over at the church in a group of refugees, newly arrived, sat a fair maiden of twenty summers or less. She was beautiful to look upon. Her missing arm was enough—it was the old story. A bursting shell from enemy hands had torn the limb from her body; miraculous the escape, sad the result.

An old lady, hunchback and childish, sat upon the church steps. She fingered a small bundle and who can say, this may have been her only possession.

Army trucks were converted into jitney buses and our civilian population was motored back to receiving centers where lodgings were furnished and meals served.

I fain would dwell upon this painful subject and draw down on my heart an incessant flow of cries from the wilderness. I dare not unlock the floodgates; in the interim let me hurry on.

“Curly” Best was promoted, by common con-

sent, to chief salvage and junk dealer. Already to his credit you could count a motorcycle and side-car, two German machine guns, helmets, gasmasks and a ferocious dagger with belt. The motorcycle was minus a front rim but Best soon found the missing piece and set to work under candle light to construct a new front wheel. Now it was not urgent that "Curly" work under candle light; a new day would have furnished the proper illumination, but, child-like, he could not stay his impatient interest. The helmets and gasmasks were begged from returning prisoners or were found along the highway where the Huns, realizing their safety and permanent residence in war-time France, had sent their headgear flying thru space with a "k—plop" upon the ground. Where Best found the "cold-steel" only the Kaiser knows.

Our good friend Corporal Blanky, peanut vendor and crap-shooter de luxe, remained in Toul on our way thru because of sickness. Poor Sundquist contracted a severe cold and was removed to the base hospital. Both boys came back to the Battery later, and I can now see "Sunny" and Blanky crossing the field and coming up to our gun position all smiles and glad to be home with the boys again.

CHAPTER 33

THE ADVANCED FRONT

On September 17th orders came to proceed to the new line. The kitchen and ordnance equipment was removed from the old lady's house and barn, and then made ready for the trucks. Packs were rolled, guns oiled and equipment examined. We searched in the hay for valuables and I was reminded of the hay fight that was waged between the lofts the night before. In the hubbub a shoe or two entered the argument and later a shower of them. "Bessie" Yourstone received a shoe, with compliments, right on the "dome," "You can't hurt solid ivory," Jimmie Adams later ventured with one corner of his mouth slightly twisted.

And so we were leaving our summer camp. No longer could we peep thru the kaleidoscope or attend the daily "circus" of human events. In the afternoon three French trucks swung into our front yard. Four had been ordered and Lieut. Duffie cursed the erratic Frenchmen. In staccato French he speedily jumped upon their guileless heads and was rewarded with, "It tiz ze order." Very well, thot the Lieutenant, and after consulting the Battery decided to accept the three trucks and move in the best manner possible, because to wait for another truck would have risked a night ride amid phantom sky raiders and sombre thots.

Just before leaving a sergeant of the medical corps came for the salvaged motorcycle. "Curly" Best relinquished all claim and returned the stolen property. Sergeant Miller tucked his newly acquired double Lewis rotary machine gun away in our baggage and made good its escape. Where he acquired the gun and how was always a mystery to me but on the Front every company soon learned the art of self help help.

So now we were off. The three trucks raced past the familiar village graveyard, out onto the highway. The small village of Ansauville faded in the distance and we threw a wistful glance back to our summer home, our place of initiation. Legs and arms dangled over the edge of each crowded truck. Lieut. Duffie was certain that only Yanks could travel thus.

'Ten minutes' ride brot us to the front line trenches so recently evacuated by the Germans. Elaborate trenches they were with shelter, running boards and communication facilities. Beyond the trenches our highway showed marked evidence of artillery activity; the road was literally torn to pieces so thoro had been our fire on the twelfth when the Huns retreated over this same route. Several companies of colored engineers were at work repairing and placing this main artery in order. In the fields on either side we counted thousands of shell holes.

A single tank, alone and obdurate, stood motionless upon a side hill. Why did it not move and join the traffic? What was there to impede its

progress? Had its mechanism refused to play or had a shell blotted out its life? We could not say.

Our route ran thru Bericourt, Commercy, Essey, Pannes and Nonsard. About one mile beyond Nonsard, on the road to Vigneulles we stopped. The location was three miles due south of St. Benoit, two miles east of O. U. Heudicourt and two miles west of Pannes. We camped that night on the edge of a stately forest.

CHAPTER 34

THE FUN BEGINS

With very little ceremony we quit the trucks, unloaded our baggage and provisions and, in scattered formation, scrambled down the lane and across a green meadow. In the first clump of oaks we staked our claims and pitched tents. Sgt. Gilbert and kitchen force soon had a roaring fire started under a septic coffee can and we were served, a few minutes later, with a steaming cup of coffee, corned beef, and hard tack.

A large canvas stretched over our ordnance and provisions was covered in turn by green branches for camouflage and a guard was stationed nearby.

In our little pup-tents we were having a "bully" time. Wayne Huffman and I buttoned shelter-halves and bunked together. To allow proper drainage a small ditch was indented around the tent. Then a hollow was scooped to allow for hips and grass inlaid gave some measure of comfort.

The first evening was warm. Wayne played his guitar as I sat upon my blanket writing home. The sun was set and twilight brooded over the country. From a camp across the meadow came strains of music and the fulgency of nature struck a sympathetic note in every heart. War was least in our minds and in its stead was a lavender joy of the great out-of-doors. In nature's wonderful

influence we gained a new lease on life and I can remember tucking into army blankets with a new hope of a future home coming and utter trust in the Great Architect of the Universe.

Darkness gathered. A night-bird sent forth a plaintive call and a slight breeze rustled the leaves about our tents. In the watch of the night all were unmindful of the star shells that intermittently illuminated the Front, except the guards who walked their posts in military manner. A moment of utter silence and lassitude came. The guards stopped short in their tracks and listened intently!

A report; biz-ez-ez-ez-zn-zn—BANG! The shell found its mark near the corner of the woods, two blocks from our camp. Another report and—biz-ez-ez-ez-zn-zn—BANG!

Had Fritzie observed our movement in the afternoon and was he now searching out our location? Was the German Landstrum preparing an attack? Biz-ez-ez-ez-zn-zn—BANG!

The Lieutenant stirred in his tent. He was restless and fully aware that the bomb-proof trenches we neglected to dig might become an urgent necessity. Another shell. We were helpless. As the seventh and last shell came crashing thru the air we quit our tents. The projectile plowed up the earth across the meadow a kilometer away. The explosion died away and the lull that followed added to the growing suspense.

A distant whir greeted our ears. An enemy plane, loaded with "eggs," was on an errand of

destruction. Distant searchlights soon found their mark but the nocturnal visitor was undismayed, for amid the crashing of anti-aircraft shells he came steadily forward. It was a Gotha, a giant of abnormal proportions.

The plane passed over our camp flying low. We held our breath and for us it required but little imagination to visualize the result of a dropping bomb. Deep in the woods "she" unloaded and the series of explosions was a sad reception for dough-boys yonder. The plane made a wide detour and with a disappearing night-raider the anti-aircraft guns died away and once more all was quiet.

A night hawk broke the silence and later the boys slipped out into dreamland one by one. The evanescent world of strife became the confirmed haven of peace and rest. Out into starry space amid nebular vastness we flew that night and only with great reluctance did we return to waking consciousness the following morning.

At eight o'clock breakfast was over and the Lieutenant assembled the Battery for the purpose of forming a scouting party. Two French Captains were on hand early and explained that within the wooded tract was located a German anti-aircraft battery and also that fifty or sixty Germans were roaming around loose within the sector. So in a fan-shaped manner we spread out over the surrounding woods and at noon all returned to camp without success. In the afternoon it rained.

The following day was a busy one. Without ceremony we struck tents, gathered together our

possessions and scampered into the forest. About three hundred yards away were located several abandoned German camps, the barracks and out-houses of which were in comparatively good condition; the reader will remember that the drive of September 12th was such a complete surprise that the Hun retired in haste and disorder, with little time to destroy the buildings while evacuating.

So the boys descended upon the camp with bulging arms and glaring curiosity. Then came the scramble for beds, stoves, cupboards, chairs, tables, candles, lamps, and the many other useful household articles which Fritzie left behind. If you were quick and grasping you were in luck; if slow and unselfish you were out of luck. On the Front it's every man for himself, possession being nine-tenths of the law.

Our new camp consisted of four small shacks and the kitchen, irregularly grouped among the giant oaks and making an altogether delightful summer camp. The woods were inwrought with heavy foliage of fern and shrubbery but war and military life blotted out the romance of nature and placed her on a war basis.

Utility, not beauty, was the diction of Thor, god of war, and so long, ugly bomb-proof trenches and shell craters, which were as gaping wounds, dotted the landscape. Splintered or uprooted trees accompanied every shell hole. Caved-in dugouts, barber-wire entanglements, rubbish piles, foul-smelling stables, and the works of man generally were strewn about—a constant reminder of war.

Our little shacks were soon in order; bunks were nailed into place; stoves and pipes fitted, curtains hung, carpets laid and bric-a-brac daintily and tastefully placed, that is—to a soldier's liking. For instance, in one corner McHenry nailed a souvenir Hun helmet, a gas-mask, guns, daggers, trench knives, hand-grenades and other dainty articles. On his table stood a carbide lamp in its last stage of corrodent beauty; a sweet smelling pipe; several well worn volumes; and the usual matches and cigarette ashes.

Corporal "Vic" Legerton insisted on nailing nice pictures, clipped from a photoplay magazine, upon his portion of the wall and I can assure you that "Vic's" excellent taste placed him on par with our friend David W. Griffith.

I wrote a story some three weeks later about number one gun-crew's shack, or Palace as it was afterwards named, and the boys were so pleased with it at the time that I now recopy it from an old letter under date of October 14th, 1918, for your pleasure. "U. S." is a fictitious character but the story is true to life.

CHAPTER 35

THE PALACE

Nestled between giant oaks in a deep forest there stands a shack. I say shack; yes, outwardly. A stranger would glance at it but once and then turn his casual look to other objects of more interest which nature has so generously strewn about. But wait, let your attention be arrested if but for a moment; let me show you about. The Palace will interest you, yes, but the life that stirs therein will astound you.

First I will give you a bit of history, my friend, concerning the ground upon which the Palace stands. Let us take this path which leads thru the forest and up to the front door and by the time we reach the Palace I will have given you a story—a story alive with romance. This is a familiar old path. The boys travel over it every day; it leads from home to duty and from duty to home.

And now the story: You see, it was in the year of our Lord, nineteen fourteen, that certain Prussian "gentlemen" engineered the assassination of an Austrian nobleman and operations began. The world today is aware of the sinister intentions of the German High Command. Austria served an impossible ultimatum on Serbia and Russia mobilized. Germany saw her chance, shouted "Der tag!" and, like the fierce leopard, sprang at the throat of Europe. France came to the rescue of

Belgium as did also England. Later followed Italy, Japan, China, Montenegro and then, alas! much later, after gross violations of neutrality had been committed by the Central Powers, the Stars and Stripes crossed the "pond"—with Lusitania fresh in memory—bringing the Yanks under her sacred folds. Which act saw practically the entire earth under arms.

Meanwhile the Hun hordes overran Belgium and Northern France. Battles of a desperate character were fought and the brave French, sadly in need of soldiers and equipment, fell back fighting stubbornly, and reluctantly giving up ground inch by inch. And now let me take your attention for a moment from this gigantic conflict and all the elaborate details which must naturally be the result of so vast an effort, and let us turn to this sector of the battle front—this beautiful woods. You see, Fritzie walked this very path that you and I are now treading, not a month ago. Think of it! A month ago the Hun overran this very spot. He built barracks and outhouses and dug-outs. An elaborate mass, indeed, with every modern convenience for house keeping, and with a four-year residence which gave ample time for improvements.

O! yes, they have been here four years. Look—over there is a row of officers' huts. Not bad looking, eh? Notice the moss covered walls and the rustic effect, the windows curtained to match.

My friend, would you be surprised if I told you that the day after the Yanks passed thru here, the

Hun on the run, you could pass from house to house and discover such articles as pianos, inlaid hardwood furniture, large golden-framed mirrors, et cetra? Ah! we are drawing near to the Palace. Yes, I mean just all that and more; it is a haven of rest and comfort and strange to say, on the Front, Peace.

Watch your step, the recent rain has made the path rather slippery. Now, over there in the front yard is our washing outfit. There we boil, scrub and chase the germ. But never mind this beauty spot, let us enter the shack. That board walk that leads around the side is a new stunt, the boys made that improvement this morning. You see, we are working and improving our home most every day. Note the curtained windows and that potted plant; an improvised affair, I'll admit, but works wonderfully. There is the polished brass French dress helmet nailed over the door—a decoration, I say.

Let me open the door, friend. There; yes, a regular German lock, a block affair with a horizontal handle, which, by the way, is indicative of their nature: Running sideways and ending nowhere in particular.

Hail! Hail! Fellows, let me introduce Uncle Sam, who hails from the States and brings greetings from Col. Puree. U. S., meet the Irish Cook. There, I knew you'd take. Once of the States, always. Meet Mexican Pete. No, no relation, just trimmed it that way in defiance of old Bill Kaiser. Now, this swinging bunk on the right as

you enter the Palace belongs to Gib. O! beg your pardon, Gib, allow me to introduce U. S. I thot you were out. Yes, yes he was in High when the war broke out and is still going with full steam ahead.

Over here, please, by the double bed. Meet Mac. Broad shoulders, eh? Some kicks, I say. He paid 57 francs for them. And now shake hands with Smiles. Yes, that's his nature, and it's sunshine and a good story served hot any hour of the day. Smiles is acquainted with the two-headed Black Eagle but he now fights under the one of Golden variety.

Swede next. Born in America and he's an American. He laughs, and smiles, too, with a bit of voice attached, and generally sunshiny. In this part of the Palace the boys have lace curtains and flowers and everything, but now thru this door into the next room and meet Crum and Bart; two Yanks, and bed fellows they are. Right in that massive mahogany bed they rest their bones every night. Crum is Yankee but Bart was born in sunny Italy, tho now he's one of Uncle Sam's very own.

Now, over on this side: This two-story affair balances the furniture of the room, don't you think? Sharp, Old Man Sharp! come down and meet a friend. Let me advise you that this fellow is a pointer; no, not a dog but a gun-pointer and the other day a Boche fell from out the depths of the sky just because this fellow pointed him out.

Now, meet this little fellow Fuller who, after each meal, is full-er-n the next fellow and who is a wonder. He doesn't say much but thinks a great deal—about home 'n everything. Yes, yes, a regular guy is this Big Boy. He merely lengthened his bed to allow for extra feet and legs.

And now, over in this corner, done up in marble and white blankets is Caruso II, sometimes Scribby, who sings like a nightingale and entertains to your heart's content—in dugouts when shot and shell is falling, even.

Meet Wayne of guitar fame. O! yes, the instrument you now hold has received much attention, but then, he tells his girl all about it. Let us be over with the introductions and we will have a tune later. Wayne plays Hawaiian music that sends chills up your spine. Meet Ledger, mentioned in the Journal and now serving his country. These pictures tacked about the wall, especially that hugging scene—but then, I'll tell you about it later.

Colonel Rock, meet U. S. That object behind the bunk is not a dangerous weapon; just a walking stick—(while the Colonel turns to procure the cane)—he's a bit cranky, old rather and writes a little to amuse himself but it's all junk for I've read his stuff.

Allow—Kid Thompson—allow me to introduce one of pugilistic fame. Yes, he's small, but O! that wicked left! And now last but not least: Meet Deacon Powers. He has seen service in the ranks at the Chicago stock yards, also Coney Isle

and can repeat, in one breath, the pedigree of his Guernsey cattle a mile long. Clever, you know, and can sell anything or announce a sideshow to perfection. Give us a handkerchief sale Deac, we're thru the introductions. O, very well, if you promise later.

And, now look us over, U. S. Note how neat and clean everything appears. The Skipper inspects our Palace three or four times weekly and at each inspection his praise is ours. When we arrived on the spot there was nothing, just a shack and four bare walls. And all these hundreds of articles we have salvaged from here, there and everywhere. We started in a small way but each day has added to the beauty of our surroundings. This card-table unfolds thus. The green felt makes an excellent playing board and many an hour at "500" is spent over it. In the front again, please, where we have engravers, gun-smiths, boot-makers and mechanical experts. Behold unique leather carrying cases, fancy canes, made-over officer's boots, engraved shell-cases.

You must go? Allow me to open the door. Why hesitate? O! you have enjoyed the visit? Ah, yes, a delightful home. We're all boys and we belong to Uncle Sam. We fight, too, but we live here in our spare moments.

Goodbye! (a ringing chorus) goodbye! You are welcome here at any time. Come again and see us and—the Palace.

CHAPTER 36

A FRENCH SEVENTY FIVE

In the afternoon of our first day in German-made barracks number one gun-crew was ordered to establish and begin excavating a gun-pit. At the edge of the forest and across a green meadow in the open our ambitious crew began operations.

Advice had reached us that a certain French battery, equipped with the famous French seventy five, was moving up to our advanced position and that we were to share in the manning of their guns, *i. e.*, the French hold the position two or three days a week, and we the remainder. Now we had been promised auto-mounts of American make and so were not particularly disposed to work on French materiel, much less to associate intimately with, and perhaps be dominated by, the French. But Uncle Sam was slow in shipping equipment and we were anxious for action so Lieutenant Duffie accepted the plan which afterwards proved to be very successful.

Fresh dirt was soon flying. A hole 12 feet across and 3 feet deep, on the hill side, was leveled out and later a 7 foot conical depression was sunk in the center to the depth of 4 feet.

Before the excavation had scarce begun a French sergeant, who helped direct the work, insisted that a protective camouflage for enemy eyes be erected immediately. Whereupon we planted 4 posts,

nailed on the cross beams, and stretched the painted burlap on chicken wire over the frame work, tacking down the ends. It was over in a wink and our French friend marveled at seeing some Yankee pep in action. Under this camouflage we worked unobserved.

When the boys returned to camp at sundown with picks and shovels over their shoulders it was generally agreed that a good half day's work had been accomplished. Next morning Sgt. Hisey's crew was on deck and began placing the foundation of the semi-fixed 75 millimetre French anti-aircraft gun which had arrived the night before.

First, the circular running board was adjusted, according to the level, around the outer rim of the inner conical depression. A receiving standard was placed in the bottom of the cone and slanting struts from the running board to the receiving standard were bolted into place. Two heavy wings were then carefully and laboriously dragged into place by all hands available, and bolted.

This accomplished, the rifle was wheeled into a forward position and, with the assistance of a special frame work and ropes, was hoisted into the receiving trunnions, then capped.

Of course the French sergeant, whom the boys argued ought to be wearing knickerbockers, directed the job with the usual arm and shoulder exercises amid spasmodic and loutish gesticulations.

The gun proper being in position it remained for us to place and adjust the vertical and lateral

telescopes, the vertical and lateral deflection setters, range reader and then test the azimuth of position. Sgt. C. C. Ledgerton, ex-top and hard guy, was an expert in mathematics so with his assistance the complicated and combined range drum and vertical deflection setter mechanism was put right, in this manner: First, the gun was elevated to forty-five degrees according to the triangular level, then a level, placed upon a receiving surface of the arm extending from the axle of the piece to the drum and setter, marked the horizontal position and the two parts were held in co-ordination while bolts and nuts were adjusted.

To adjust the telescopes the gun was pointed at a distant church steeple with the aid of the peep-sights on the gun barrel and a good eye, and then the telescopes were directed to the same object and clamped.

The camouflage was now rearranged, slight excavations made for shell cases and tool boxes, odds and ends completed and behold! a man-made monster with a long jaw and an ugly bark ready for action.

Meanwhile Sgt. Daniel and Radio Sgt. Ward had supervised and installed the range section apparatus some forty feet to the left of the gun-pit. Telephonic communication had been established between the out-post, a mile away, and the range station, and then with the gun-pit. The reader will understand the function of the out-post by this example: A plane is spotted by the DP

(distant post); the spotter phones the information to the spotter at the gun position; the two observers then track the same plane by means of special instruments. Now draw an imaginary line from each post to the plane and a line between the posts and you have a triangle. The distance between the two posts or base line being of a known quantity the angles can be computed and thus the altitude of the flying target is trigonometrically calculated.

We used the string altimeter tho Sgt. Hoffman would occasionally try his luck on the tachyscope. The real value of the tachyscope was in finding engine speed of target or speed and direction of wind. Here again the Brock double sight seemed superior to the tachyscope for angular speed.

And so the whole catalogue of anti-aircraft instruments was in a constant state of evolution. One instrument of today would be replaced by a superior one of tomorrow. Back at Fort de Stains our Battery had drilled on the finest struments the market could produce but now with the semi-fixed French battery which Lieut. Duffie had affiliated with we used the available instruments and made the most of the situation.

The range section was composed of the following men: Two out-post observers; two gun position observers; two tachyscope readers; two telemeter readers; one spotter; one telephone operator; one range commander; and the Battery Commander. The range section supplied the following data to the gun crew: Enemy or allied plane; azmuth and

angle of site; range; altitude; speed and direction of target; speed and direction of wind; angle of approach. The range or distance of a target was called off by the telemeter reader who, knowing the altitude, could adjust and read his graduated instrument.

The angle of approach always was a puzzle for us and an equation to be guarded, particularly since our flying enemy planes always insisted on turning, sidetracking and looping into all sorts of directions and keeping us in a constant stew.

About 25 men are required to man and operate an anti-aircraft gun. This includes the range section or source of data, the gun crew proper and the machine gun men whose duty it is to protect the pit from low-flowing planes. Later, when a second gun was placed, it required nearly twice the number and so our Battery of a hundred men was divided and alternately worked in the field and remained in camp.

Now, before taking up further anti-aircraft technique, let us consider a day at the gun-pit. The following chapter is also a story copied from an old letter. It was written in the pit between acts and now as I re-write it I can almost smell the powder, and hear the noise of our pet monster.

CHAPTER 37

A DAY AT THE GUN PIT

"Time to get out, fellows." Such are the first words of the day uttered by the guard. A rude awakening, rather, but necessary. Sleepily the gun-crew crawls from out their respective bunks and in the semi-darkness don their military attire. It's chilly out and clear, a good indication that the Boche will be out early scouting the skys and looking for battle.

A slight breakfast of coffee, sugar and bread is served in the kitchen, a sort of an introduction to a later breakfast. "Eats" over the crew fall in, right face, let's go, and they're off to the gun-pit.

Adown the old familiar path they march, in double column, and a few minutes later the camp is seen to fade in the dimness of early morn. Winding in and out the stately oaks, avoiding a small clump of brush here and circling a hollow there, the path leads on thru the forest, out thru a wide peaceful meadow and over a slight knoll.

The battery is located in the open but is cleverly camouflaged. Strangers approaching the pit are surprised to find an innocent clump of brush suddenly transform itself into a pit containing a vicious man-made animal, possessing a long jaw and an ugly bark.

The first period in the pit is spent in keeping warm. Perhaps an enemy visitor looms up in the sky ahead; perhaps a whole squadrilla. If so the crew fly to their respective posts, rush thru data and adjust for firing.

Breakfast time has arrived and another crew is coming up the path to relieve the early risers. A brisk walk back to camp developes into a run and "run, you mess-hounds!" is shouted, the echo rebounding from the distant kitchen as the boys rush for mess-tins. Yes, it's double time and a right hungry bunch they are; appetites more powerful than Niagara.

"Eats" over, mess-tins washed, beds made, floors swept, the crew once more fall in, right face, let's go, and march down the winding path, out over the meadow and up the knoll to the gun-pit.

"Boys, let's make her shine," the gun commander repeats, and in less time than it takes to wink the cotton waste is flying to and fro on brass instruments, brooms gather stray debris, oil cans are jingling about the iron work feeding the hungry joints of the fierce monster, and shell cases are fitted and greased. A test of instruments and materiel is made and finally the entire crew report from their respective stations if "in order."

The range section, stationed several yards to the left, is doing likewise and telephonic communication completes the tests. The crew and gun being in order the commanding officer makes his daily round of inspection. Faults are corrected, suggestions are made and shop talk in general is exchanged.

All is ready for action. A target may appear early and again all may remain quiet for hours; the weather decides. On a clear day there is great activity, on a cloudy day the men are idle. They read whole volumes even, or skim over old magazines, play "500," et cetera. But the men are ever alert, ready for the signal which calls for action.

"Attention! Target BC front," comes ringing over the wire. "Azmuth 340° , angle of site 10° ".

"Traverse the gun to the right," repeats the gun commander.

"There he goes," one member of eagle-eye fame calls out, and then before it takes time to count ten all is ready and,

"On target!" shouts the pointers.

"In range!" calls the telemeter reader.

"Commence firing!" repeats the commanding officer.

The four lines of communication ring with data: "azmuth 342° ; angle of site 15° ; speed 45; altitude 3000; going minus 45° ; altitude 3500"—comes in quick succession.

"Range 6000!" shouts the telemeter reader. The loader has heard the command "commence firing," and forthwith receives a shell from the fuse cutter's relay and with dextrous quickness rams it into the breech, closing the recess with a clang. The lanyard is pulled by the firer and BANG! It's a wicked, deafening, indescribable, twanging howl, a monstrous growl more powerful than the fiercest call of a South African lion.

BLOU-A-NG! She speaks again and amid the roar continues the firing data: "Coming plus 45°; plane turning; going minus 75°; change fuse; 30/55; range 7000."

Whirl-i-ez-ez-ez out into space the timed explosive travels with "Fritz" written on every shell. The fuse has been cut for 7000 and that very range she explodes, sending hot steel in every direction. Should Fritzie happen near—why—it's a hurried trip earthward for him, and a promise of flowers later. The powerful ripping destructive agent hurled into silken wings and human flesh has but one result. A nasty business to contemplate, but war is war and the enemy must be conquered.

The moth that lingers too near the flame is burnt; and so 'tis thus that Fritz often comes to a bitter end.

* * * * *

On the afternoon of the 24th (Sept.), the 7th day in Nonsard woods, number one gun-crew under command of Lieut. Duffie went into action. We spotted, tracked and fired into a group of seven Fokkers and as luck would have it we winged a plane. It was our first victim.

The bird-man fell from a dizzy height and it was later at camp that we talked things over and realized the import of the matter. Perhaps this aviator's wife or sweetheart was home tonight waiting his return. Perhaps a child was calling—"daddy." Till now we had been silent spectators, not a life had we snuffed out, but now, now we were guilty of murder. With our own hands we

manipulated a death-dealing machine and with skill in action had found the mark. But why argue—it was war and you know, crime ceases to be a crime in warfare.

CHAPTER 38

TYPES OF PLANES

Our first victim was flying a Fokker, a plane which army men are generally agreed upon as being king of the air. It is a very fast traveler, a good fighting plane and is a favorite among the German Aces. Its general appearance at a distance is hawk-like, and our spotters never failed to pick up a Fokker however distant the moving target or hazy the atmosphere.

Our second victim was using a Rumpler. Perhaps this air-machine is second in popularity with the flying Dutchmen. These two types were used almost exclusively in our sector. Once or twice we spotted an Albatross DIII and the L. V. G. Night bombing was carried out by the Giant Gotha, and this machine, prior to the advent of the super-giant Handley-Page, was preponderant in size and poignant with possibilities.

While training at Fort de Stains we visited the La Bourge aviation field several times and on these occasions we studied the various Allied planes intimately. The Spad is the Frenchman's favorite. Next is the Neuport. Both are fighters. The English Sopwith was quite a favorite with Thomas Atkin as was also the Bristol.

The A. R. (army reconnaissance), Caudron and Breguet are larger machines tho all comparatively unused in action. Another giant was the Letord, used for night bombing. When this machine is

seen flying low it truly reminds one of a battle plane as described by fanciful artists. Its slow movement and solid features make it appear devoid of wings. For such a mass of iron and wood to move thru the air is almost uncanny, to say the least, and reminds one of receptive fairy tales and ancient miracles wrought by superior beings, masters of levitation.

The odd-looking Voison with its open fuselage and prominent nose was always a source of amusement. The Farnam was another and both were used for training only, I believe.

While in active service at the Front we saw but two types of Allied day-planes generally used—the Spad and De Haviland, the last named being used almost exclusively by the Americans.

On rare occasions we spotted an Allied stranger. For instance, one day word came over the wire that a Marconi Triplane, bimotor, was coming over our sector and a warning not to disturb its flight. It was further announced that the plane was on its way to Berlin to drop a load of propaganda over that city. Sure enough a half hour later this strange “bird,” soaring high, made its appearance and flew directly over our position.

For identification of planes the following terms were used: Stagger, reverse stagger, overhang, dihedral, cutback, sweepback, fuselage, struts, and bimotor. It would require a page or two to define these terms and this, I fear, would make dry reading, so I will hurry on with my story.

CHAPTER 39

HUMAN WASPS

In describing our first victim, felled from a dizzy height, I rushed over the ground quickly, for I fain would not dwell upon the murder of another or gloat over a victory.

But now I call your attention to a flock of Boche, seven in number. They are flying high over our sector, mere specks as it were, but our instruments are working and accurate data is gained for firing. They come in battle formation, these human wasps, and are prepared to sting. They manoeuvre, they dart about in the depths of the sky, and one is reminded of gold fish performing tactics in a parlor aquarium.

The wasps are now within range, sinking, falling, side-slipping. Sgt. Pearson's gun-crew fire. The bursting shells in their midst impel keen manoeuvring.

The on-coming squadrilla open up with a murderous rat-tat-tat. Machine gun companies nearby return the fire and the noise is terrific. Rat-tat-tat repeated in rapid succession comes crashing thru the air.

There is trouble in the pit—a shell case jams in the breach and Sgt. Pearson is almost frantic with excitement. Sgt. Miller's machine gun crew prepare for action. The impetuous Boche drop within a few yards of the terrain, a kilometer over

the way and now Sgt. Miller opens wide his double Lewis.

Sgt. Pearson has ejected the jammed shell case but a new difficulty has arisen. "Targets too low for tracking," is the verdict from the range section. Pearson directs his crew to fire point blank. Are the seven wasps sweeping the landscape of human life? They are. The machine guns stationed in the forest yonder strive desperately to shield a moving column of cavalry, the object of contention, and Sgt. Pearson's crew work with abated breath.

And now the white puffs above the tree tops split and rend the air and the concussion rocks the planes in its furor.

Number one gun-crew had long since been aroused from peaceful meditations and we stand in a clearing of the forest near our barracks watching the contest. During the interval of Sgt. Pearson's failure to break up the filibusters we shout and curse at the ill-luck of crew No. 2, and wonder at their stupidity.

But now we hear new reports and see the white puffs above the tree tops. The land defense bark feverishly—rat-tat-tat, rat-tat-tat. The anti-aircraft gun continues to speak on the fourth second.

The squadrilla is seen to flinch; they scatter. They disperse in all directions and a new wave of machine gun rattle is awakened. Damage had been wrought in Allied territory; was it fair to allow a complete escape? We watch the seven fading planes cross the line. Looking into each other's

long drawn out faces we slowly but grudgingly admit defeat.

Had the gun-crew been the object of attack every man would have been wiped out, but it was'nt and our men live to tell the tale. Sgt. Miller received a citation for gunnery on this occasion and I have no doubt his crew (Brazie-Fears-Dunbar-Willian) were prime factors in deciding for the Boche a hasty get-away. The amount of damage inflicted by the Hun on this occasion I never discovered, but it was rumored that the loss of life was considerable.

In the evening when Sgt. Pearson and crew returned to camp there was much chatter and petty talk exchanged between the gun-crews. Rivalry was keen, especially since No. 1 crew was credited with a victory.

"Scribby," fusecutter for crew No. 1, allowed that McQuiston, fusecutter for crew No. 2, was just as good a man as he. "Lead" Needham, Pearson's prize loader, had them all beat, but Rear was rotten on the telescope. And so-and-so was punk or so-and-so was par excellence.

The usual clash of opinion soon produced a few good stump speakers. A group would gather about in general conversation, quiet at first, and then as a natural result of gossip someone would drop a bomb right in the midst of earnest speakers. Immediately would follow a storm of protest. Crescendo-like the volume of guttural sound would increase and lo! from out the seething mass steps a man—a prophet of the new age and he remarks

that the bomb story is right and just, furthermore that he himself knew it to be positively a fact.

Such was Gulick, East, Sterne, Woolaver, McHenry, Jester, Emerick. Was it the love of argument that prompted the martyr in his debates?

Corporal Blanky used to "knock 'em dead" with his pet hobby: "Is a Marine a superior soldier?" For hours Blanky would hold forth, first in dignity, later with crisp tongue-twisters, and end in boiling rage. "Frog" Foix and "Heinie" Steiler were both especially fond of getting Barney's "nanny."

Tom Chase, walking encyclopedia, furnished the Battery with much information. So certain was Tom of his statements that he was not prone to argue. He was a type all his own and later at the signing of the armistice Tom told the boys that, "Havis signed the armifist and now the proolly-jectiles were no longer shot in the Ar-gone-on forest." Chase got the idea from a Havis press notice and attempted to give it in his own language.

Little Fuller, the mascot of Battery B, had absolutely nothing to say. Sharp, Pelbrough, Willian, Lyon and Hoslett were all members of the "silent club," having no doubt taken their eternal vows at birth.

CHAPTER 40

MODERN APARTMENTS

American genius went to work the day of our arrival in Nonsard woods and not a day passed without some improvement being made. Soon our shacks became real homelike and modern in every way. Steger, ex-cook and plumber, installed an excellent shower bath. Upon a recent battlefield Steger found a camouflage tank, a large framework resting on wheels, which was drawn to camp and used for the bath-house. A box of fittings, several lengths of pipe, an out-door washing boiler and stove, a hugh wine tank—all entered into the construction of our most excellent and acceptable shower. The main pipeline which supplied water to the kitchen was tapped. A good wood fire once started heated water for an entire crew and the boys often splashed about in all their glory.

What a contrast it was to the little stream over in the meadow where we had bathed the first days in camp. Sgt. Louis had contracted a severe cold in exposing himself to the chill autumn weather and others absolutely refused to chance the dip.

For this new shower we were willing to forgive Steger all the misery he had caused us while working under him at K. P. To peel a sack of spuds, wash a dozen greasy pans, and keep the fire going all day was work enough. Ask any ex-soldier. But Steger was not content and carried a perpetual growl for the K. P.'s benefit. The Battery Com-

mander reduced him to a private and after that Steger braced up; so much so that he put in the shower of his own volition, built a new shack for Lieut. Duffie and made himself useful generally.

We added to our comforts very materially a short time later. The story is a short one and it is this: The Keystone Division camped near us a week, then moved on. Upon their unguarded divisional supply house our boys descended and returned with foodstuffs valued at hundred of dollars. Sardines, salmon, beans, crackers, white sugar, brown sugar, coffee, English biscuit, and other eatable things were left behind because of shortage in truck space. The divisional supply officer had failed to place a guard over the priceless foodstuffs and our scouts discovered the fact. When Lieut. Duffie saw the situation he ordered the kitchen force to haul back to camp as much food as possible, but it was too late to stay the pillage of youthful wreckers who had cut open the reserve rations in their mad rush for the small package of cigarettes and sack of sugar which Uncle Sam had so temptingly placed in each reserve can.

Next day an order was posted on the bulletin board commanding every private to turn his stock into the kitchen, so in order to conceal the loot the boys ingeniously hid their groceries in divers places. Crew No. 1 was not to be outdone on this occasion. The boys removed several boards from the floor, excavated a square hole and then, after pulling the nails, replaced the boards. The hiding

place proved a success and for several weeks the boys indulged in midnight suppers.

Bibby's squad salvaged a piano. "Vic" Ledger-ton found a large mahogany bed, a card table worth several hundred francs, a fine gold-framed mirror and several ornamental vases. Others brot to camp articles found in their travels about the neighborhood.

So our barracks was added to from day to day. The kitchen was overhauled, the Top's office was refurnished, carpeted and curtained, a new officers' quarters built, board walks placed, fences repaired, and finally, a large dining room was erected.

And so the work went on much the same as an ant-hill. "Human ants" scoured the country about and brot back to the "hill" every movable article, valuable or otherwise.

It was always a source of pleasure to return to our apartments after a busy day at the pit. In a very up-to-date manner Collins would make brown sugar candy, sugared buns, and brew a little coffee while we played at 500 over a costly card table.

Over at Bibby's shack they did the same, except style. A solidified alcohol chaffing dish, resting on the piano, was used; surely this was the height of fashion. But there was this objection to Bibby's bunk-house: Everyone smoked. Before the evening had run its course you could cut the smoke so thick was it, and all windows and doors being closed to retain the heat and prevent a stray beam of light escaping, there was no outlet. Consequently the boys' clothing was literally saturated in nicotine.

CHAPTER 41

THREE LETTERS

October 6th.

There is something in the wind; something is wrong with Germany. A certain report direct from Headquarters was passed along the line and, if true, why—the war is over. It is the beginning of the end. Perhaps when you receive these lines a substantial peace will already have been gained. If not peace, near-peace and I know what this means to you at home, dear. We cannot quite comprehend this new departure; we who are fighting and know not of peace. We are sceptical. But O! is it really true that peace is near? Can you understand what it means to the doughboys and artillerymen all along the line? I dare not dwell too long on the subject; it will blind us in our work and duties. I must wait for a confirmation of what has been received.

It is growing late. The boys have been wildly discussing our home-coming and have already constructed an impossible hypotheses, even; all because of the slight bit of news which came over the wire this p. m.: "Germany ready to sign an armistice."

October 20th.

This morning was reveille as usual; 6:30. Breakfast at 7:00 This being No. 1 gun-crew's fatigue day we were out early to gather and cut wood for the kitchen. The continuous rain interfered with

other duties and so, after an hour's work wielding ax and swinging saw, we retired to the Palace. Which was well, for at 10 a. m.—what?

In a wild commotion chairs went flying across the room. Other movable articles stirred from their accustomed places. A clothes line and fresh washing went dragging across the muddy floor. Cheers—and howling—and screeching—and, what's up? Well, the secret is out—MAIL.

The crowd gathers quickly, breathless, hatless, and with no concern for rain—or shine. It's mail, that's all, and all eyes are centered upon the mailman. Out of the scuffle I emerged with a handful, all triumphant and trembling. Mail. Was it a dream? No, it was real. This very moment I have pinched myself. Yes, I am awake and mail was distributed this every morning at 10. It is now 6:30.

And so having emerged from the throng I slipped back to my bunk. I counted, I hesitated. Six long weeks without mail! Why did Uncle Sam torture us thus? Fourteen letters, ten from you, my darling wife, and four from the folks.

Gibson received thirty-one. Isn't that a handful?

I would clear away the singles first. Then I fingered the precious ten. I counted them and then—recounted them; and then placed them, unopened, in my left shirt pocket.

Out from my shelf came a fresh suit of underwear, a pair of white sox, towel and soap. The bath was refreshing and the letters and I returned

to the bunk. With shoes removed I sat Yogi fashion upon my blue blanket. I unbuttoned my shirt pocket and relieved my heart of its pressure. Ten letters. The dates were scattered but soon that was adjusted. With letter opener in hand I listened to the rain; why should I rush to open the precious ten after six long weeks of waiting?

I sat Yogi fashion and the rain came pat-pat-er-ing. It seemed to be a song filled with ancient memories. As it is one of my greatest pleasures to read while music fills the air, I opened the letters—pat-pat-er-ing—and read.

October 28th.

This afternoon a Boche, flying very high, crost our lines, braved the anti-aircraft fire and emptied a load of propaganda. The glistening sheets floating upon a gentle breeze seemed to tarry in the downward flight. We were on the gun at the time and the little beggars fell in our midst. I enclose a copy:

“The German People Offer Peace

The New German democratic government has this programme:

‘The Will of the People is the Highest Law’

The German people wants quickly to end the slaughter

The New German popular government therefore has offered an Armistice

And had declared itself ready for

Peace

on the basis of justice and reconciliation of nations.

It is the will of the German people that it should live in peace with all peoples, honestly and loyally. What has the New German popular government done so far to put into practice the will of the people and to prove its good and upright intentions?

(a) The New German government has accepted all the principles which Pres. Wilson proclaimed as a basis for a general lasting peace of justice among Nations.

(b) The New German government has solemnly declared its readiness to evacuate Belgium and to restore it.

(c) The New German government is ready to come to an honest understanding with France about

Alsace-Lorraine

(d) The New German government has restricted the U-boat war

No Passenger steamers not

Carrying Troops or war material

will be attacked in the future.

(e) The New German government has declared that it will withdraw all German troops back over the German Frontier.

(f) The New German government has asked the Allied Governments to name commissioners to agree upon the practical measures of evacuation of Belgium and France.

These are the deeds of the New German popular government.

Can these be called mere words, or bluff, or propaganda?

Who is to blame, if an armistice is not called now?

Who is to blame if daily, thousands of brave soldiers needlessly have to shed their blood and die? Who is to blame if the hitherto undestroyed towns and villages of France and Belgium sink in ashes? Who is to blame, if hundreds of thousands of unhappy women and children are driven from their homes to hunger and freeze?

THE GERMAN PEOPLE OFFERS ITS HAND FOR PEACE.

* * * *

On the reverse side is printed the same in French: *Le peuple allemand offre la Paix.*

There is unusual American artillery activity tonight which is, no doubt, the answer. Notice the "New German government" (with the small g). This is so much effort wasted. Of course the clumsy mind of the German High Command imagines that a sheet of printed matter will wreck the morale of our troops. Every American not only is acquainted with causes and conditions of this war, but also receives exact and unadulterated news concerning developments. For instance, Ludendorf resigns; we knew this fact before our paper reached us.

I tell you, it is the unanimous consent of the men who are actually in battle that this war shall continue until unconditional surrender, nothing less, shall be realized.

It is every dark now and there is intense artillery fire along the Front. But in the Palace it is quite comfortable. There is a fire in the stove which radiates a comfortable heat. The boys are reading, writing, talking, and unusually quiet. I

am writing on a smooth board which is resting on either side of my boarded bunk. An empty hand grenade with rope wick burning gasoline is my source of light.

I am thinking of home and you, dear. Wouldn't it be wonderful if I could walk in on you tonight and talk with you just five minutes? It would be a great privilege.

CHAPTER 42

OUR SECOND PLANE

On Friday, October 18, at 4 p. m. we were brot to a high pitch of excitement when a Rumpler was spotted by our men sailing along just above the tree tops. Without command from Lieutenant Brush we swung the gun around and began firing point blank. The enemy had slipped up unawares and was flying so low that the range section could not furnish the required data. Let us return to the thrilling incident.

The plane is coming on. Sgt. Miller, the iron-monger, points his double Lewis in the invader's face. What is wrong? A shell jams. Miller curses the luck while we swing our piece. The enemy flies over our position. We can see two men in the fuselage. Why do they not use the machine gun, the barrel of which is protruding over the edge of the observer's pit? The plane is now flying down the field. Sgt. Miller opens up at last and tracer bullets make a path to the Rumpler.

We fire again. The range is estimated, but the explosions are deadly near. Why does not the enemy land and avoid destruction? In another moment we would surely find the mark. McHenry shoves in the shells on the fourth second and Thompson pulls the lanyard with repeated vigor. Sgt. Fleck is estimating the firing data, for now confusion has gripped the range section. The

plane turns and makes an attempt to reach the line. Our white puffs are telling. Another second and the plane would be blown to bits. Suddenly the pilot points the nose of his plane downward forty-five degrees and makes a hurried landing within our lines.

We later learned that a fragment of a bursting shell case had penetrated the gasoline feed and forced the aviator to land. Two men were captured; an Austrian Captain and a German sergeant. They had ascended over their lines an hour before to observe their own camouflaged positions and had lost their way. Once estray they groped about for guidance, but instead of friendly advice they were accorded a hearty reception and a shower of steel.

We never knew why the observer refused to use his deadly machine gun. Sgt. Miller's accident and our delay in swinging the gun gave the enemy an excellent chance to fire a few healthy rounds.

The next morning an aero squad salvaged the captured plane and on their return to the rear stopped at our gun position. Many bullet holes had penetrated the checkered wings and it seemed to us a miracle that neither pilot nor observer had been killed or wounded.

Our Battery received official credit for this second and last plane a week later; and now the Battalion was credited with five planes which set a new record for anti-aircraft work. One plane in 10,000 shots was the old record; we brot it down to one.plane in 500.

Considering the difficulty of aircraft work this is a good average and later Colonel Perkins, Commander of air forces, Second Army, A. E. F., mentioned our work especially in an official communication to General Pershing.

CHAPTER 43

BALLOON A-FIRE

A Fokker succeeded in burning Balloon No. 69 on October 30th, and a more thrilling and dare-devil stunt I have never seen. It was late in the afternoon. We were in camp and several boys and myself were industriously working in our front-yard laundry. Enemy planes had been flying over all day but all flew at an extreme height, better than 10,000 meters. The boys were observing a group of seven Fokkers when one plane detached itself from the group and disappeared deep in our back lines.

I was washing away peacefully when suddenly a cry went up in the camp. I looked up and there, just above the trees at arms length, it seemed, was the sly Fokker. The wings were silken white except for the maltese crosses which were pure red, and a disfigurement to the plane, I thot.

An observation balloon was stationed a half mile back of our camp; we quickly guessed the culprit's errand. Why did I not have a rifle in my hand? It seemed a simple matter to pump a few rounds into the plane so near.

Fritz was clever. Having disappeared into the back lines he shut off his motor and noiselessly vol-planed back on the rays of the sun unobserved. But now the rat-tat-tat of machine guns surrounding the balloon opened up with a cyclonic violence. Sgt. Pearson's crew began firing a barrage. Had

the Boche expected such a reception? Was he prepared to withstand the fire? We watch him in his cyclic movements and are prepared to see him dashed to earth the next instant.

The two balloon observers have jumped—they are drifting to earth. Fritzie ventures near and opens up with incendiary shells. We can see the flaming projectiles flying thru space. His first effort proves a failure and, making a figure eight, Fritz comes head on firing as before. This time the gas-bag is ignited and quickly drops to earth in flames passing the frail silken parachutes of the descending observers on its way.

Fritz has done his work but is now threatened with an added wave of machine gun bullets. The anti-aircraft bursts rend the air and the concussion rocks the plane in its flight.

The moment is tense and fraught with possibilities. We reach a clearing in the woods, bare-headed and breathless. Fragments of shell-cases whistle past and drop at our feet, but curiosity far out-rides all sense of danger. We cheer for Fritzie, tho we recognize the law of retribution. Over our head he flies and is soon out of reach of the balloon's protective machine guns. Sgt. Pearson's fire is continued, but the impetuous bird-man proves illusive. He is now headed for the lines and defiantly passes directly over our gun position. In the interim Sgt. Pearson swings his gun and then plants a few shells on the retiring plane's tail. But try as they did, No. 2 crew could not reach their mark.

Suddenly two Spads drop out of the sky. They have been drawn to the scene of action and seek to pounce down upon the victorious Hun. They riddle the air with machine gun bullets and apparently the game is up. But no, even this latest attempt at the life of the Fokker fails and we watch Fritzie disappear over his line in safety.

The boys were agreed that had the plane been downed with the pilot escaping alive, we would have shaken him by the hand and said, "Well done, brave lad, we admire your nerve."

* * * *

On another day two planes came over the line and when within range we began firing. Their close liaison gave us a better target and our shells exploded deadly near.

One plane made a sudden plunge forward. What is that dangling speck? It's a human being. O! what a ghastly sight. Down—down to earth, then a silent journey to other realms.

The plane righted itself and flew back to the lines. We later argued that a piece of shrapnel had found its mark, causing the pilot to lose his balance temporarily and perhaps also severing the strap which held the observer, thereby throwing him in the plunge.

I am reminded of a scene as recorded by Theo. Roosevelt, the big-game hunter: A lion, ferocious and maddened by a gun-shot wound, came tearing thru the brush. Roosevelt stood his ground and then, as the beast neared his victim, our mighty hunter sent one crashing shot into the very jaws

of the on-rushing monster. The lion staggered, then fell, but the momentum carried the beast to the very feet of Teddy. This was sport de luxe.

Of the two, which can be called the greater "sport?"

CHAPTER 44

HUMAN NATURE

Sgt. Hisey's crew No. 3, under command of Lieut. Brush, left the Battery on detached service. They returned from Pannes later, whither they had gone to hold down a French position temporarily and to relieve the crew, many of whom were sick. Now the greetings that passed between the boys on their return was good to see. Glad to be with the Battery once more, the boys celebrated with a clean shave (oh! how that ten-days growth pulled), a bath and clean clothing. The cooks, under Mess Sgt. Gilbert, prepared an extra good meal which was devoured almost in gluttony.

Then began the tales of their adventure and everyone talked well into the night. Well, to tell the truth Sgt. Hisey had a bit to say. The first night out the Germans put a hump in things. Wicked shells fell all around them and Lieut. Brush was in favor of moving. But the boys decided to risk the dugouts and remain. One shell fragment tore a corner out of Gulick's kitchen. For ten days the boys worked under difficulties.

As is natural among Yanks the usual comedy came into the conversation for more than its share, with the result that poor Schriber, Kuhnle and "Snapper" Ingram occupied a humiliating position in the social order of things. It seemed that the first night at Pannes, when the shells were dropping near, Kuhnle, in a drawl and jagged

voice, would invariably remark, "That—was—a—go-od—one." The upshot of the matter was that Kuhnle received the beautiful title, "Coon—(pause)—nelly." Thru constant repetition Kuhnle soon learned to take his new name in a matter-of-fact way.

"Snapper," on the other hand, refused to depart from his tin "derby" or helmet. Day and night, in work or sleep, "Snapper" wore his tin hat. Soldiers generally are averse to weakness or timidity and because "Snapper" was over cautious, perhaps, the boys made him an object of their balderdash and jargon. One is here reminded of Darwin's, "survival of the fittest; and natural selection." In active warfare you swim with the crowd or sink as "Snapper" did weighted down with his tin-lid.

The following day, after returning to camp, "Snapper" wore his helmet around camp to our great astonishment, for long since had we replaced the helmet with our little convenient over-seas cap. We were willing to chance the game to obtain comfort, especially since Fritz had failed to locate our position.

Bill Schrieber's ebullient spirit and prying nature led him astray one day. Finding a queer-looking German rocket upon the battle-field, Bill proceeded to have some fun. Igniting the rocket it shot into the air and exploded. Now in the ordinary course of events such a proceeding would have passed unnoticed, except that Bill was taking a long chance on the rocket and consequently his life.

Biz-ez-ez-ez-BANG. A shell from the enemy lines. Another report, another shell. Bill struck for camp with lightning speed. He had drawn the enemy's fire. For this infringement, Schreiber was threatened with a court-martial. Bill's punishment never came to pass, but the experience had a satiable effect upon his prying nature.

CHAPTER 45

PLAIN RACKET

Every night at the Front was a noisy one and we soon accustomed ourselves to the nightly racket. From the Argonne Woods down the line to Pont-a-Mousson and beyond came the drum-fire and bombardment of a million cannon.

On guard in the dead of night with naught but yourself, the star shells and artillery drum-fire for company, one is tempted to wish that he were home in peace and safety. While all are retired and in dreamland you walk your post alone. Perhaps a stranger comes out of the blackness of night. You halt him and ask, "Who goes there?"

If a friend calls out you advance him to be recognized. The gun and bayonet held firmly in position gives a sense of protection. Perhaps our friend has lost his way or is looking for some location. He passes out into the night and once more you are alone with your thots. Alone, yet in the very midst of activity.

Every nerve in your body is alert. Hearing becomes abnormal and you learn to recognize sound in its manifold nature. You know in an instant whether a shell is coming or going and can gauge its flight accurately. I have listened for hours, in the dead of night, to the interplay of shot and shell. If a shell is headed your way you soon discover the fact and without ceremony flatten out on the ground. A bursting shell throws its fragments

outwards and upwards so one is comparatively safe flattened out if the shot is not a direct hit. If the bursting charge is hollow-like it is a gas bomb and immediately you adjust the gas-mask, which is worn at all times, and then give the alarm thru the Klaxon.

All large troop movements were made under cover of darkness. I have heard the tramp, tramp, tramp of a million feet and the bang and clang of moving artillery. Hour after hour in the dim hours of morn, artillery and infantry passed upon the highway and as the last van-guard faded in the distance an immense drum-fire would break out. Then would follow, at dawn, a rolling salvo interspersed with machine gun rattle—a mingled harmony well known to doughboys.

If by some miracle one could have gone to the scene in an aerial carriage, he would have witnessed, perhaps, a local engagement, with Fritz and the Yanks holding a disputation over a piece of real estate. In this manner the Yanks were continuously harassing the enemy, biting into new territory and consolidating old.

Without doubt, the night raiding dreadnaughts, the Gothas, furnished much anxiety as regards personal safety. Ask Chase. On a clear night they would come over the lines buzzing in our ears and we were certain, positively certain, that the droning plane was circling directly above our camp. I can remember how the boys, myself included, would draw the blankets gracefully over their heads much the same as children do when frightened by a darkened room.

If an "egg" had been dropped thru the roof of our barracks, I can assure you, dear reader, that a blanket would have been no protection, rather you would have gathered around a gaping hole in the earth the next morning wondering how the shack had disappeared. For I call your attention to the fact that aerial torpedoes sometimes gorged a hole in the landscape so large that a horse at the bottom of the crater would have appeared as a cat by comparison.

CHAPTER 46

"DEACON," "SILENT" AND I

Excursion parties on foot were a familiar sight around Nonsard Woods. While off duty the boys were allowed to go wherever they chose. "Curly" Best, "Vic" Ledgerton and others made a trip to the front line trenches near St. Benoit. Sgt. Gilbert and party went as far as Thiacourt in the Battery's truck. Powers, Fuller, Sharp, Ledgerton and I walked over to Vigneulles, tho we refused to climb the hill when we arrived at its base. Fresh second line trenches had been completed the week before and we wondered at the wisdom of wasting so much wire and labor, especially since the Hun army was so completely disintegrating. The trench communications and equipment were complete in every detail and it dawned upon me then and there how thoro and business-like the Yanks were carrying on the war.

One day "Deacon," "Silent" and I planned an excursion to the nearest canteen, Y. M. C. A. or otherwise, whither we went in search of chocolate and sweet things. One lonely Y. M. C. A. wagon passed our camp during the two months so you see we were in dire straits as regard toothsome food. Upon returning to camp in the evening I sat down and wrote a short essay and I here re-copy it for your pleasure:

"Deacon," "Silent" and I left camp at one o'clock midday. According to military require-

ments we wore the regulation uniform, knit sweater, gas-mask slung over the right shoulder and resting on the left hip, cane and gloves to match. Our destination was the nearest canteen, Y. M. C. A. or otherwise, where chocolate, jam and other toothsome food is sold. And incidentally we planned to plunder a deserted shack or two and scout for valuables on our way.

So we started out, the sun high in the heavens and a good breeze that filled the lungs to overflowing. In these parts there are forests galore; trees, trees and more trees. Old “Deacon” takes to the road and we’re off thru the forest and the camp is lost to the eye in a twinkling.

“It’s a whole hog and a biscuit! Anyone else? Boys, they’re hot and a heatin’—only a dime, the smallest part of a dollar—anyone else?”

No, we haven’t come to a carnival—its only “Deac.” trying out his voice in view of returning to his old job down at Coney Isle. His voice echoes thru the forest and we’re laughing to split, one of those good old side-splitters that makes one gasp for breath. “Silent” has little to say but joins the fun.

The canteen in question is several kilometers over at a French village “in this direction,” as one M. P. advised, but it is in “that direction” ventures another. We travel on watching the mile-stones and keeping a peeled eye for valuables, for it’s the old stamping ground of Fritz that we cover in our walk.

Thru an opening in the dense forest we come

upon a sector of trenches. We stand in the midst of terrible memories; where doughboys fought and bled; where democracy fought autocracy and won. At one spot the crevices in the earth formed the letter E and I was tempted to think that Father Time had traced the second letter of the word PEACE as a token of encouragement for struggling and sorrowing humanity.

There are tank tracks and the numerous paths wind thru barbed-wire entanglements, over trenches, and across the battlefield. Bits of hand grenades are scattered about and here and there is seen the familiar German helmet. Gun-pits, dug-outs, snipers' posts, communication trenches, telephone wires and all the accessories of warfare engage our attention as we travel on. Across the small valley is a series of foothills and from our station we discover a town nestled cozily on a side hill. We decide that a canteen is there and so strike out over the broad green meadows and fields; fields that have not known the plough in four years.

Here and there on the battle-scarred soil of France, in territory sacred to lovers of Joan of Arc, is evidence of Hun thoroness. At one place we came upon a desolate building which had been wrecked and fired; upon this ruin a shell had lately fallen throwing the fresh under-earth over the burnt area, giving to the scene a gruesome aspect as tho a mourner had recently decorated a neglected grave with fresh flowers. Destruction over destruction is more than the human heart can understand.

At length we reach the village (Buxieres). Already the civilian population had commenced to habitate their old shell-wrecked homes and to our surprise we discover that women and children are down at the village laundry. To a soldier in the field the gentler folk are a curiosity, to say the least. We hungrily fed our souls in their presence. Every true soldier returning to the States and home will be generous in courtesy and will have a heartier consideration for the better sex. He will worship his sisters in a degree heretofore unknown.

O! what a desolate, useless, God-forsaken spot where SHE is not in evidence; where SHE neither comes nor goes, nor laughs, nor revels in the company and joy of souls more tender in age.

Suddenly “Deacon” remembers that we have come for “eats” and stirs “Silent” and I from out a deep reverie.

“*Quoi direction est la kantine, sil vous plait?*” we venture in broken French to a passing brother soldier.

“La, la!” and more French that we took for granted, this soldier offered, accompanied with a bow that bordered onto a curtsy.

Canteen found we proceed to smack our lips and prepare for sweet tootsie-wootsies—baby food a la carte, minus knife, fork and spoon, and manners.

“What have you for sale,” we ask the Frenchman, for it happened that the only canteen in town was French.

"No compre," he returns with a shrug of his shoulders, and we revert to the ancient mode of communication. With finger signs we discover that he has canned goods. For instance, there is salmon (gold-fish), tripe, roast beef and other products of the once living, now dead and offered for sale. In these commodities we are not interested. And to our utter disappointment the supply of chocolate, confection and jam was exhausted.

Doggedly we about faced and traced our way up the picturesque village street, passed officers and soldiers representing many nations, gave the women and children one last homesick glance, and were winding our way thru the under-brush of the side hill.

On our return to camp we crost a few vineyards. Clusters of sour grapes were still clinging to withered barren vines. These we plucked and hungrily ate. "Not bad," was the unanimous opinion of "Deacon," "Silent" and I.

As a consequence of shells coming and going there are but few moments of quietness and security on the Front. However, the constant shelling from either side is such a commonplace affair that the noise has ceased to startle. But hush! Listen! something rings in the ear and freezes the very blood in the veins! Every emotion known to man vibrates in one symphonic harmony. Hush!

No—'tis not shell, nor destruction, nor death, but a beautiful old-fashioned melody that comes floating on the wings of the evening breeze; a clarionet duet from a camp yonder.

Tell me that the spiritual in man is not; tell me that the physical is supreme, and I am deaf, for my soul cannot hear these things. But whisper to me that Providence is near, that the inner man IS and my ear is yours.

We flew home, at dusk, on the wings of song.

CHAPTER 47

DAYS OF FUN

Theatrical stunts, both professional and home talent, helped pass away the time. Down at Balloon No. 69 you would find the boys every Friday night. Good vaudeville, direct from New York, was staged and directed by real show people who had come to France to do their bit; "Professional War-Actors' Association," or some such title.

The Balloon men had converted a large German barracks into a modern showhouse. A double entrance prevented escaping lamp-light and every crack and crevice was sought out and stuffed, making the house appear as an integral part of the landscape in the blackness of night. However, the closed conditions harbored foul air and the copious tobacco smoke from a hundred cigarettes made one somnolent to the point of sleep ere the evening had run its course. But the vaudeville stunts were to the American's liking and the boys often returned to camp with mental cornucopias. Nicotine abstainers usually remained home for convenience, not pleasure.

Quite a dramatic yet anxious moment came one Friday evening at the showhouse. A sketch was in progress when suddenly a group of night raiders stormed our position and began dropping their deadly missiles. Just over the way an explosion belched forth flame and steel and yet with all the disturbance the actors continued in their roles.

finishing just as the last explosion died away. It was a trying moment, but soldier-like our entertainers carried the full program on to its conclusion.

In the Palace one evening the boys put on a 3-act show, and Captain Duffie (promoted) and Lieutenant Brush were invited. Wayne Huffman played two good selections on his steel guitar, a guitar by the way, of unique appearance, having names, dates and places carved over every inch of its surface. Upon the strings of this guitar Wayne played with such feeling that we involuntarily closed our eyes and floated on the wings of Hawaiian melody to that little island out in the Pacific, there to meet and sing with dream people, there to join the nature spirit dance and witness the holy incantations to gods and men who dwell in Paradise.

We were later rudely awakened and dragged from the sublime to the ridiculous. "Bart" and "Crum" staged a monkey and organ-grinder scene. The monkey was well imitated and we cheerfully gave our offerings.

Old "Deacon" Powers livened things up with a mimic auction sale. "Dec" can put more words into a second of time and can talk longer and louder in a single breath than any one I have ever met. In a casual conversation with "Dec" you always laugh but to hear him in an auction-tirade is to split your sides and I can now vividly recall Capt. Duffie and Lieut. Brush both convulsed in laughter, the Captain almost sliding off his chair in helplessness.

When "Dec" winds up for business he never cracks a smile. In a forceful, continuous, almost automatic style he sold a Guernsey cow in this fashion, the following being but a fraction of his words:

"There she is, boys; look her over. How much am I bid? Do I hear 50? 50, who'll make it 60? 50, who's make it 60? Look her over, boys, she's cow from her horns to her tail. Wide between the eyes, shows lots of intelligence. She's got an udder on her like a barrel with a teat on every corner. Do I hear 60? 60, who'll make it 70? 60, who'll make it 70? 60 and 10 to go. 60 and 10 to go. Do I hear 70? Boys, she's a good looker, a high hooker. She'll make you butter and give you her young, feed your family and double your income. Do I hear 70? Do I hear 70? Going at 70. I'll sell her for 70. Going at 70. So help me God, up goes the hammer, pop goes the weasel—and sold, for 70."

"Deacon" gave a sidewalk handkerchief sale next and finished the evening with a side show announcement, "Lonzo Lorenzo—he eats 'em alive!" As long as I live I shall never forget old "Dec" (Luverne C. Powers), merrymaker and friend excellence.

To mention comedy is to remember the fun out at the gun-pit. Oft times we would wander out to the pit to watch the French at work. Unlike the Americans, who remained in position all day, the French would retire to their bunks about 200 feet over at the edge of the forest, leaving a spot-

ter on the job. Suddenly a Boche would appear from nowhere and then the excitement and the hullabaloo would begin. Answering the general alarm, Frenchmen could be seen emerging from the forest half clad and straining every muscle in their endeavor to reach the gun position. If the call was most urgent, cries of *vite! vite!* (quickly) could be heard and then the scramble would begin. While it was a loss to the general efficiency of the Allied armies for these French to employ such loose methods, a fact that we deplored, still their acts furnished much amusement for us.

The Battery Commander (French) was a likeable fellow. He would visit us practically every day while on duty and several times returned to camp to partake of a real American dinner. The boys would accost the Captain with, "How are you today?" In reply he would say, "Three beans on silver plate." Now, to hear a Frenchman repeat this simple phrase is comical, and every overseas soldier will tell you so. The mystery is this: *Tries bein si'l vous plait* (very well, if you please) was remade to suit the Yank and all over France today you will hear, "Three beans on silver plate."

Still another source of comedy was Neustead, the mighty hunter, who went forth into the wilds of Nonsard woods one day and returned with a "ferocious" animal. A poor army horse, gassed and in a state of collapse, had been turned into pasture to recover as best it could. Upon this beast of burden Neustead pounced and returned to camp with his prey. By gentle treatment the beast

slowly recovered. Later Neustead salvaged a wagon, harness and hay, reclaimed a stable and was soon running errands for the Captain.

"Auk" Sterne was recognized as the Battery glutton. You could always depend on Sterne returning to the serving table for seconds, thirds and fourths, even. In the field all food is served cafeteria style, so the first group of men in line have their choice of the food being served. Unusual racket always attended every meal and at the first stroke of the gong all men grabbed their mess-tins and scattered pell-mell into line. To be first in line was to be first served with an excellent chance to finish in time to follow up the line for a second helping. It was always a problem for the mess sergeant to feed all men alike and in spite of his careful observations and strict rules a few men always received more than their share.

The boys would watch the cooks hawk-like and if something extra was announced, after the main meal had been served, fleeting feet and rattling mess-tins was the answer.

Crumrine sat with his back to the serving table one day. Several men passed him on the run. This was well known language to "Crum," for he deciphered the meaning in an instant and followed. Upon returning to the table with an empty plate I asked the reason. "Giving out spuds," was his answer. Now "Crum" was not interested in plain potatoes, in fact he did not know just what he wanted but someone was running, and like the lamb had followed.

CHAPTER 48

CENSORED MAIL

On October 26th Lieutenant Samuel R. Dows returned to our Command and Lieut. Brush went to Headquarters, Aircraft Service, 2nd Army, at Toul, to act as Adjutant to Colonel Perkins. With the advent of Dows trouble began. By way of explanation let it be known that Sam Dows was a lad of 22 summers or thereabouts. Now that this fact is known what follows will be perfectly comprehensible.

Every army man has had occasion to blame the censor for meddling with his innermost thots. Many lads omitted the better part of their sentiments in letters home just because the Captain or Lieutenant of his company or battery had the right by law to read his mail. This barrier was unsurmountable for some and as a consequence the folks at home received scraps of paper which could hardly be termed real letters.

When I wrote Mrs. Stone I held back nothing and in ten and twenty page letters once per week I wrote the best that I could offer—love, sacrifice, philosophy. Yet, for my pains Lieut. Dows called me to his office and gently but firmly informed me that I was writing too much. Very well, I was content to reduce the number of pages per letter, but listen! Our great and learned academician proposed that I straighten out some of my philosophy; that I cease from my insane and bom-

bastie railing. Since when had the army imposed this latest shackle? Was my God-given right to think to be seized upon and dwarfed? No, not so, and I shot back straight from the shoulder, with a piercing glare, a question, "Will the Lieutenant explain whereof I have offended his philosophical interpretation of life?" He passed the question off to a slight technical army phrase in my letter with an affable meekness that quite amused me.

Ingram and Woolaver had been called to the office for a similar offense. Their letters home were too numerous was Dows only complaint, and this was soon adjusted satisfactorily—as far as Dows was concerned.

My next letter home was written seven days before the signing of the armistice. It was intended for Dows' eyes but before I could mail the letter in the Battery's office Woolaver and I were transferred to Headquarters at Toul. The letter was given to Lieut. Brush, now Captain, who returned it requesting that I tear out a page which "seemed to reflect upon a brother officer," he said. I did, and saved the page which I here re-copy:

* * * This week we came to a final understanding regarding mail. Four letter per man per week was suggested as quite sufficient. Assuming that each letter contains a full sheet of four pages it would total sixteen pages per week. Now depend on it, you shall have sixteen pages from your husband each week.

A series of ambiguous statements from men of

this command leads me to remark that I may be dictated to in regard to the amount of reading matter I shall write, but by my God I hurl my pen with defiance into the face of any man who dictates to me or even suggests as to WHAT I shall write, statistics and geography of military matters excepted. I understand the necessity of limited freedom in the army but I cannot quite understand the apparent new departure of curtailing freedom of thot. I am a soldier of the United States Army and that is something; that is my protection.

Into the crucible of war have been cast the dross and scum of life and let the melting pot be further added to by the empty brains of those all-wise beings who propose to crush all they do not understand. I think this is sufficient. * * *

CHAPTER 49

LAST DAYS OF THE WAR

The morning Woolaver and I left camp all was quiet and peaceful. No. 1 gun-crew was at the pit, the kitchen force was busily engaged in preparing the noon meal, and the remaining men were following their usual pursuits. At this moment we were totally ignorant of the peace negotiations which were destined to reach maturity six days later. We were inclined to congratulate ourselves upon leaving the Front for territory free from shot and shell; from German-made barracks to a regular French garrison; from mud to pavement; from a violent occupation to one more peaceful in nature.

As we went spinning along the highway we returned, in that, to the camp and wondered how the boys would brave the elements during the winter. Already the sun was drawing near its southern goal, the Tropic of Capricorn, making the nights long and the weather cold. From our position (45° north) it seemed that Old Sol reached the apex of his daily ascent at 8 a. m. and then remained suspended in the mid-heaven till 4 in the afternoon.

Winter had come. The oaks were practically bare and golden brown leaves carpeted the surrounding woods. Our feathered comrades were in the south, having gone thither in quest of a sunny clime. In the early morn it was quite cold but

refreshing. Ice formed over all water surfaces and one morning the landscape was so frosted it had the appearance of snow. Usually it was cloudy and altogether quite lifeless and bleak.

On this morning, however, the sun was bright and the air fresh. We breathed deeply, my friend and I, for old time's sake, as we dashed forward over blood-stained roads.

At Headquarters Company we stopped, a half hour later, to transfer to a large truck. We found ourselves now in company with four other men, all detailed for work at Headquarters in Toul.

While all were standing about waiting for dinner, a nearby battery broke the silence and sent a ripping shell out into space. We noticed a Fokker coming over. Bang! Bang! repeated the gun many times but the obstreperous one sailed on.

Suddenly out of the high clouds two Americans dropt and Fritz, seeing his escape cut off, began diving and sideslipping back to his lines. The Americans followed, dropping two and three hundred feet at a plunge. The droning agony of over-worked motors was heard at every turn. Fritz was in a precarious position. He swung towards our line, then made a sharp bank and started homeward in the face of machine gun bullets. In another instant the plane made a plunge and dashed to earth. One more soul was added to the invisible hosts of the battlefield.

After dinner we started for Toul. As we passed the danger zone all breathed deeply. Woolaver whistled—a sort of safety valve, good for nerves—

and later broke into, "Now honey, don't be late, I want to be there when the band starts playing."

Spinning along at a good pace we passed destroyed villages and untilled fields. Mile upon mile we left behind, until finally a few civilians, women and children along the roadside were evidence that we were once more in civilization. At five o'clock we passed under the arched toll gate into Toul proper.

Next day we were duly established in office after having taken an oath to secrecy, and soon we recognized that we were working in an office that represented the brains of the Aircraft Service, Second Army. This office in turn was an integral part of the Aircraft Service, A. E. F., under command of Col. Hopkins, who received his orders direct from Headquarters, A. E. F., General Pershing, commanding.

It required no mean intelligence to understand the war-map and its relation to near-peace. Without divulging army secrets I wrote home and said, among other things: The latest reports seem to indicate that the conference between Generalissimo Foch and the German emissaries is proceeding satisfactorily. PEACE is actually in sight. Think of it! When you read these lines the whole struggle will have ended, perhaps, and these words will not be thrilling. But think of the time in which I am writing. Tomorrow we may know the story. Tonight we actually do not know. We may imagine, we may even construct a Peace to suit ourselves, but imagine the outlet of feeling that will be ours

when the word comes ringing over the wire. I can remember in my letters last month how I hesitated, even avoided speaking of the future. From every report that reaches the office I can now construct but one possible result. O! the day when peace comes! It will be difficult to hold the boys; their outbursts will be loud and long. Flags will wave, drums beat and hearts will throb.

CHAPTER 50

NOVEMBER 11TH, 1918

Somewhere in Nonsard Woods in the chill hours before dawn crew No. 1 stirred in their bunks to ask if this was The Day. Ice cracked under their feet later as the boys tramped thru the leafless oaks and up to the gun position. Overcoats, gloves and extra clothing added a degree of comfort to aching feet and nervous hands. Was this the last? THE NEWS: Was it true? Eleven o'clock?

The drum-fire along the Front was intense. In the advancing day a new energy seemed to grip the artillery. What a holocaust this incessant fire must be causing in the closing hours of a world war! In the inferno of ages, amid flames and steel and enhanced by the fruitful signs of a closing Armageddon, the last vestige of the Prussian war-machine, once proud and haughty, was being swept from existence.

At eleven sharp the gun-crew put thru a cleaning shot and the next instant all activity came to an abrupt end. The war was over.

At Toul the bells were tolling and men, women and children were shouting the glad tidings. At my typewriter I paused to glance out of the window. A Catholic lady over the way was making the Sign upon her breast. *La guerre finis!*

A few moments before Col. Perkins had read the armistice terms and I can truly say that he lacked

in military dignity on this occasion. We all smiled and proceeded to slap each other upon the back, child-like, and were not aware of our actions. Recent events had unnerved us.

Out on the Front, as I afterwards learned, the opposing armies were meeting on friendly terms upon the battlefield. Sgt. Gilbert and a group of men drove up to Thiaucourt and crossed no man's land. The Germans welcomed the boys with outstretched hands, and in magic friendship both friend and enemy met, inspected each's equipment and exchanged souvenirs.

At Headquarters there was a general let-down from the high tension and rejoicing. At noon a U. S. band gave a rousing concert down at the public square. I fell to merry making among the thousands of soldiers representing every Allied nation, and the villagers. The crowd grew and the music increased, flags waved and horns honked, bells tolled and people laughed, making apparent silly gestures, unmindful of each other. The brisk late-autumn air surged thru our being and there was a feeling that a New Age was being ushered in.

I returned to the office to clear out some paper work and then, after a hasty supper, I once more walked the streets of Toul and joined the throng. In the multitudes of peoples I was lost.

Darkness came, but wait! What seemed strange? Why, it is the illumination of a million incandescent globes from the shop windows thruout the town. All blinds had been removed that very

afternoon, for now the air-raiders were vanquished; the air-raid was a ghost of the past. Hand lamps were conspicuously absent. A town that seemed at first to be a mere village grew in size and the crowds increased as the country people joined in. Traversing a dozen crooked streets and turning a "million" corners I once more came to the crowded public square. At the bandstand I hesitated. A cornet solo, "Just a Baby's Prayer at Twilight," awoke tender memories and tears stole into my eyes as my heart thrilled in the thought of a future homecoming. Music is a wonderful agent to awaken the memory and make clear the mind.

The fog began to roll in from somewhere and soon the platform lights stood out in the hazy night like distant stars. White clouds of vapor escaped with every breath and the crisp air spoke of added vigor. The usual waves of human beings surged to and fro but I remained unmoved. O. Henry advised his readers that he often sought solitude in the dense throng. Alone and encircled by strains of beautiful music I fell to thinking of near and distant past, of the present and ventured into the future. With folded arms I kept my eyes glued to the hazy lights and reveled in the music. In that hour I wondered if the scientists would still cling to the mechanics of the brain and the cessation of life at the grave. Surely man can no longer be deceived in these things.

At a late hour I crawled into my straw bunk.

CHAPTER 51

A POEM

Toul is an old city. A high protective wall and familiar moat surround the ancient city while four or five gates with draw-bridges give access to the outside world. If you have seen one French city or village you have seen all. Toul is no exception to the rule. The streets are just as crooked and its business as intangible as ever a layman could find in France.

For twelve days following the armistice the office force held down chairs at Headquarters—nothing else. War was over and our paper work dropt to the freezing point. Eager to finish a story I was working on at the time, I remained after hours. It was during the long still watch of the night in this comfortably heated and convenient office that this book was conceived. Once started the manuscript was pursued industriously night and day.

Kenneth Hall, humorist and nondescript dramatist, happened to be a fixture of the office. From Battery D he was recruited and when he came his nonsense came with him. Outside of old "Deacon" Powers, my friend Hall caused me more hearty laughter during our fortnight of association than I had ever crammed into a like period before in my life.

One night Hall remained at the office. He sat near the stove and between his Ethiopian lips he held the familiar cigarette. To him friend cigar-

ette was the elixir of life. Defiant in all my advice he puffed away furiously and blew the smoke in my face. Now this was more than I could stand and with an emerald glow in my eyes I gave this eighteen-year-old lad the mental trouncing of his life. He promised to give up the habit, and to reinstate himself in my estimation he wrote, that night, the following:

To the Cigarette

You were with me on the transport,
When I crossed the ocean blue,
You were with me in the harbor,
When the tedious voyage was thru.
On the long and dusty march,
With a heavy laden pack,
You helped me to forget
About the aching of my back.
In a stuffy little boxcar
That was lightly strewn with hay,
When I couldn't sleep, you helped me then
To pass the hours away.
Thru the dreary months of training
You went with me clear thru;
And when I was ordered to the Front
I went—and so did you.
In the dugout under shell-fire,
In the kitchen after chow,
In the gun-pit with the gun-crew
You were with me everywhere. But now—
You must find another master,
For tho you've never failed me yet,
For reasons that *she'll* tell you,
We now part, friend cigarette.

Needless to say, the next day Hall purchased a 3-inch amber cigarette holder and, with this walking advertisement, came to the office puffing louder and longer than ever. I reflected that advice is cheap and that Hall had received his share at half-price. We never mentioned the subject again, tho he continued in his loquacious manner and we went on merry making as before.

Parrish, another fixture of the office, who had little or nothing to do, pulled the hob-nails out of his ground-grippers and polished up for society. "Gene" Martin dreamed of Kansas City and home while Lane longed to return to the old game of firing—not at the Front, but on an iron-horse running over the Canadian-Pacific.

CHAPTER 52

GLAD TIDINGS

Adjutant Brush called the office force to his desk one morning. As we stood at attention trying to suppress the emotions that surged thru our being the Captain spoke. "We are ordered home," he said and as the magic words fell from his lips we beheld a vision. It seemed that we were once more in sunny California—a home—the loved one—outstretched arms—old familiar land-marks—friends—peace.

Glad tidings animated the office that morning and our rejoicing ascended unto heaven. O! the joy that is born of sacrifice. That morning we lingered over the cup of life and sipped of its native nectar.

Out at Nonsard Woods Battery B had received the word. Skepticism ran rife in the ranks at first. Surely there must be some mistake, the boys argued. When Lieut. Dows ordered the Battery to answer reveille at 5 a. m. the next morning and be prepared to march it suddenly dawned upon the boys that the word was true. McHenry became jubilant to the degree of insanity. Wasn't he going home to a wife and baby? "O! my baby! My baby!" he shouted. Months of suppressed emotions broke forth in a phosphoric rhapsody—"O! my baby!"

"Curly" Best, less demonstrative in nature and with an eye for business, gathered his souvenirs

about himself. Late into the night the boys argued pro and con over their packs. Should they discard everything but bare essentials to give comfort in marching? Or should all clothing be retained, especially the numerous souvenirs, trusting to the auto trucks for transportation? It was a question.

Around the stoves the boys gathered and the flames filtered out thru the pipes. All curtains were removed and a candle, shining out into the night, stood before every window, a practice that had been in vogue since the first night of the armistice. Like old Lucifer the Yanks broke every rule in defiance of King Restraint. The luminary window offering and the leaping flames were but examples.

Several boys rolled their packs in the evening, retiring in overcoats and full dress. Corp. Bibby always rolled his pack twelve hours early. I never saw it to fail. Crumrine usually finished his pack three minutes before departure. At a late hour the boys settled into a fitful sleep.

The following morning at five the guard passed the word and soon the camp was a-stir. Each man rolled his pack and arranged his personal effects. All extra ordnance was conveniently stacked for the salvage company. After breakfast all pots and pans were washed, the field range dismantled and provisions boxed. One truck carried all ordnance, equipment and provisions. The aircraft gun was left in the hands of the French so now the Battery was free to move.

The balloon company, thru the courtesy of their Captain, furnished several trucks to help in the first lap of the homeward journey. When at last every detail was complete and the procession was off, all eyes were turned to the old camp. In that closing hour with the sun hanging in the southern sky, the trees in silent sleep, the Front in silence supreme and the camp's life slowly ebbing away, the boys resolved to keep the memory of Nonsard Camp forever in the safe and sacred sanctum of their hearts.

Late in the afternoon the Battery reached Ecrouves, mentioned in Chapter 26, just outside of Toul, and the following day, November 22, Woolaver and I returned to our Battery.

Captain Duffie was in Paris, having gone on his regular furlough a week before the signing of the armistice. Lieut. Dows brot the Battery down from the woods but now Captain Brush, recently Adjutant at Headquarters, arrived to command the Battery. During Duffie's absence Dows had straightened out considerably, so the boys said, and had grown to be an altogether likeable fellow.

At Ecouvres we established quarters in a deserted and ramshackle old building pending arrival of transportation orders which would send us flying over the second lap of our journey. Rolling stock was in great demand. However, we anticipated an early move. In our new home we spread our blankets on ancient floors. Out in the yard the kitchen was duly installed and the cooks prepared three steaming meals each day.

The neighborhood was generally squalid. Recent rains added to the filth, and numerous feet churned the mud in the streets then came home and walked over the blankets spread upon the floor. The boys, having so recently come from a neat and orderly camp, were keenly aware of the condition. At Ecrouves we were fully initiated into the vagrant mysteries of the return trip.

Steel helmets, gas-masks and trench tools were salvaged here and Supply Sgt. Louis turned every unnecessary piece of ordnance possible over to the central salvage depot at Toul, receiving credit for same.

Extra clothing and souvenirs were thrown aside. Woolaver, in a wild attempt to make his pack as light as possible and thinking that we would reach the States in two weeks at least, threw away all his extra underwear and sox. Two months later in San Francisco, on the eve of discharge, after having worn one undersuit continuously the entire time, poor Woolaver replaced his blackish underclothing with a fresh suit received from the quartermaster. The discarded clothing found its way into an ash can.

I reduced my pack to two blankets, one slicker, one jerkin, one undersuit, extra, two pairs of sox, shelter half, tent-rope and pins, condiment can, mess tins, cup, canteen, razor outfit, soap, towel and tooth-brush. My writing materials were carried in a separate leather carrying case.

Add to this an overcoat, gun and sidearms and the clothing upon the person, and the list is complete.

CHAPTER 53

HOMEWARD BOUND

Headquarters and Supply, C and D Batteries arrived and now the Battalion, commanded by Major Reily, was complete, with the exception of Battery A, which came down from the Argonne forest later and joined us at Brest.

Everyone visited back and forth exchanging Battery experiences, trading souvenirs and talking over old times. Several libertines held converse with the crowd down at the village pump and succeeded in passing some sophisticated stuff for the real article. Or were these brilliant lady-smashers polishing up a stock of tales for home consumption?

On the fifth day our transportation was ready. As we swung down the village street four abreast, in the early morn, the townspeople gathered to give us a last farewell. The muddy promenade and threatening sky could not quench our exuberant spirits and we marched gaily on as a new emotion gripped our hearts. We were wont to project our thots into the future and picture the home-coming, the remaking of family ties and meeting friends. A secret happiness was firmly planted in every breast.

A half hour later the Battalion reached the Toul station. The four Batteries were assigned, in equal number, to twenty freight cars. Two bales of straw and enough provisions for five days'

travel, consisting of canned beef, beans, tomatoes and jam, were distributed to each car.

The usual delay in exchange of documents and army red-tape almost unnerved us as we impatiently awaited the signal of departure. About noon we moved slowly out of the railroad yards of Toul.

There were no regrets to leave behind, no heart-aches and farewells and handkerchiefs and tears. Back to the land of liberty, back to God's country and home we were bound, and the moving wheels were music in our ears.

On Wednesday, November 27, daylight broke over our slow freight as we were moving along the banks of the famous River Marne via Chalons, Epernay, Chateau Thierry, Meaux and Paris. Ghastly ruins greeted our gaze at every turn. Every town and village bordering the banks of the Marne had been reduced to utter destruction and devastation by the ostentatious Hun months before. Thousands of shell holes dotted the landscape, orchards were literally uprooted and a pathway of trenches, skirting either side of the River Marne for miles, were as open gashes in the earth.

Numerous graves, some decorated, others livid and sombre, struck a pathetic note in the harmony of the battlefield. We passed Epernay, twenty miles south of the now famous Rheims, with the sun at its zenith. At nightfall our troop train steamed thru Chateau Thierry, made famous by the Yanks, and now as the day was ended so also was our career at the Front ended. Our battle-

field ride during the day was a summing up of the horrors of warfare; an epitome of the mighty struggle just ended.

In the twilight we prepared our beds, closed the side-doors of the boxcar and were soon settled. The boys chatted and spun yarns well into the night.

Thanksgiving morning we awoke in the outskirts of Paris. A stopover near the round-house enabled us to wash our hands and face and cleanse the sticky mess-tins. Each battery cook prepared a boiler of steaming coffee along the railroad tracks. It was the first warmth in two days and we sipped our coffee to the very dregs.

An hour later, being advised that every man was accounted for, Major Reily ordered the train to proceed. Saying a fond farewell to Eiffel Tower, which we could see in the distance, we slipped out of Paris and were soon gliding along the fertile banks of the Seine. The beautiful valley with its bordering hills and well-ordered homes was a marked contrast to the battlefields of yesterday.

At Mantes on the Seine our itinerant freight quit the beautiful river and we were destined to travel via Evreux—Alençon — Mayenne — Laval, and on thru to Brest over the same route we had traveled inland five months previous.

In western France we celebrated the annual festival of Thanksgiving. Twenty-eight men in our car partook of cold beef, beans, tomatoes, hard bread and jam. Water from our canteens passed

for grape-juice. Ex-Cook Steger was in our car and helped dish out the food in equal portions. It was necessary to manage carefully in the crowded and bouncing car lest our mess-tins would turn turtle and spill the food over our hay, as did happen several times in the distance we had come.

With our Pilgrim Fathers we joined in Thanksgiving, not for the food we were eating, but for the great privilege of returning home to our loved ones in America.

CHAPTER 54

THE MUD-HOLE

On the afternoon of the fourth day (November 29) at 4:30, our long freight, with its human cargo, rolled into the railroad terminus at Brest. Captain Duffie was at the station to meet us tho now he was detached from our Battery. In the last few miles of travel we had watched eagerly the distant ocean, then the harbor and all its activities. We could see several huge transports riding at anchor and the boys argued that we might go aboard immediately upon arrival. But this was not to be. Instead we were herded out to the mud-hole.

From the station to Camp Pontenazin the distance is three miles or more. Now for the boys to walk this distance with full packs after having had no exercise for four days was a severe tax on the physical body.

"Snapper" gave up near the summit of the first hill and fell out. In his weakened condition he could not make the grade. The roads were muddy and a light mist fell from threatening clouds. Winter followed us to camp where "he" placed extra orders with "his" mud-mixers.

Once arrived we groped around in the dark for our barracks. Mud was everywhere. Mud was king. Crossing a lot I slipped and buried my knees in a foot of mud. My feet were caked to the ankles. Mud was on my hands and on my

rifle and in this condition I stumbled into a four-walled building which crafty contractors dared to call a barracks. Hundreds of buildings had been constructed at Camp Pontenazin of a like nature and you will see presently the diabolical effect wrought by the hand of graft.

In the city of incessant winter rain contractors dared to erect these structures without foundation or flooring. Much lumber was saved the builders—and dollars, too. The usual excavation was necessary to make the buildings level. One end of our barracks was too feet below the surface of the ground and this fact accounted for the large pool of water we found in the center of the room.

During our eight days' residence in this hell-hole dozens of boys from the Battalion reported to the hospital in sickness and, to my knowledge, at least two died.

The first night we entered our "home" everyone dropped his pack and looked about in bewilderment. No straw, no bunk and not even dry ground to sleep upon. Scouting parties were already searching the neighborhood for lumber. They returned without success. Someone discovered a stack of corrugated sheet-iron. Hurrah! Before the evening had run its course every private had a sheet-iron bed. Even tho our corrugated iron mattresses were a degree harder than wood, still it prevented the dampness creeping thru.

Battery A had arrived earlier in the day and

now the usual greetings were in order. Batteries A and B always were closely tied, having trained together at Fort Rosecrans. Captain Richie, their old commander, a West Pointer and a prince, was to this day an object of their affections. Both A and B were officially credited with two planes and this happy coincidence led to greater friendship. We talked well into the night and later when all was quiet I heard the rain patter upon the roof and felt the lumps in my iron mattress. Next morning we ironed out the wrinkles as best we could and then lined up for "chow."

Now, breakfast or any other meal was positively taken in jeopardy. To travel from our barracks to the kitchen required acrobatic skill. The treacherous mud-holes and slippery knolls caused us to step about like rope-dancers. Down near the kitchen the mud-mixers worked overtime. Twenty-five thousand men daily churned the sodden earth unmercifully. Four simple board runways, two hundred feet long, would have been excellent economy.

In this concentration camp water was taboo except for drinking purposes. For this reason the boys would tackle a rain puddle just outside the barracks, and diligently set about their toilet. Of course much care was *not* given to manicures and shoe-shines during this delightful sojourn.

Baths were in order a half mile over at the original Napoleon barracks. But to these baths the boys refused to go, especially since every man was the proud possessor of one nice clean under-

suit which was being saved for the day of triumphant entry into the promised land of good old U. S. A. To conduct a laundry in mud and rain was out of the question and the boys argued that to bathe and replace soiled clothing was ridiculous so the baths went by the board.

French highbinders just outside the camp peddled food at thrice its value. The food from our kitchen was fit for the poverty stricken only and this fact was responsible for the large sum of money that found its way into the Frenchman's coffers.

For eight days we existed in this mud-hole and each day was rumored to be the last. "Tomorrow we move." But tomorrow was several decades in arriving. Each night the ribs of our corrugated mattress grew wider and deeper. Each night our curses grew louder.

CHAPTER 55

ON THE HIGH SEA

Finally the day came. Our transport, the Leviathan, was riding at anchor in the harbor. At noon all packs were rolled. As we marched out of the mud-hole the sun broke thru the clouds, the first sunlight in eight days. To sail from France with the sun shining seemed to be in the natural order of things.

In the streets of Brest the children gathered. Hundreds of wooden shoes echoed and re-echoed upon the cobblestones. They sang, "Hail, hail, the gang's all here," et cetera. Five months previous we had heard the same melody. It was romantic then but commonplace now.

Down the street several M. P.'s were stationed to guide the traffic. As we passed Ginn shouted, "Who won the war?" And immediately a chorus of voices rang forth, "The M. P." It was difficult to discern whether our friend the M. P. turned white thru rage or fright.

The inner harbor of Brest was not deep enough to receive the U. S. S. Leviathan, largest ship in the world, measuring 40 feet from the water line to the keel. To reach the transport we shipped aboard a lighter. Twenty-five hundred men passed the gate that afternoon and finally, after the usual delay, the Captain withdrew from the dock.

It was late when the lighter got under way. Darkness gathered. The sea was cold and choppy,

making the trip a perilous one for our small well-loaded boat. Ten minutes later we were riding alongside the hugh transport. Thru the port-hole we could see an iron-wall and it seemed to rise out of the sea and ascend into heaven. We knew it to be the Leviathan but we could see only the iron-wall.

Suddenly the lighter registered a violent impact. We are thrown to our feet. Sharp investigated the trouble thru the nearest port-hole. With a look of agony, impossible to impersonate, he cried out, "She's cracked in two—what shall we do?"

With visions of a sinking ship and a frantic mob I immediately poked my head out the port-hole to verify Sharp's remark. A glance was sufficient to understand the alarm, and then to prevent the riot which threatened I shouted, "Hold your horses; she's O. K.!" The boat was a fantail lighter and from a port-hole it had the appearance of being bent, or cracked as Sharp thot, especially when the searchlights played aft. The Captain had made a bad landing but soon a dozen guy-ropes held the infant boat to the bosom of the giant father.

As we passed through the corridors of the transport our brother, the gob, eyed us curiously. Ours was the first returning combat unit they had seen, and being fresh from the field with pack and gun, and souvenirs profusely in evidence, the long line of eager spectators pointed many questions. "Is that the Kaiser's lid?" they asked Sgt. Hoffman,

who carried a German dress helmet. "Curly" Best, the souvenir hound, paraded in all his glory. There was a bit of psychology in his display, too, for later he sold a few souvenirs at a handsome profit.

The ship's guide escorted us to compartment F. R. S.-1, F deck amidship. After a good meal we rolled into real spring bunks and for the first time in two weeks we closed our eyes in comfort.

The next day, Sunday, December 8th, at 2 in the afternoon, the Leviathan got under way and ten minutes later passed Point de St. Mathieu. Nine thousand men filled the decks to overflowing, all anxious to bid *adieu* to the land of Lafayette, yet glad to close a chapter in life which, to some, had proved so bitter.

As the prow of the stately ship cut a westwardly path in the choppy Bay of Biscay we watched the fading shore until finally a glint at the unbroken sky-line was silent proof that we were riding the high seas. With the submarine menace gone we felt a great sense of security and comfort.

All thru the afternoon I watched the waves dash against the iron monster, and I was aware of a throbbing heart and a lump in my throat. Were we sailing home? O! how sweet the memory; how eager the mind. Seventeen days till Christmas; would the Battery be discharged and home by then? It was much to ask for. We were fortunate in being the first unit ordered home,

yes, but now that we were sailing, would it be possible to arrive home Christmas? And see the folks? And partake of a real dinner? And do real honest-to-goodness things?

CHAPTER 56

THE HORROR OF WAR

The passenger list included over 5,000 wounded and disabled warriors. Among these boys our small unit of 500 men moved each day and the horror of warfare, in these men, was emphasized to its highest degree.

The dead—they do not suffer; their reward is heaven. But look upon these mutilated men, these legless, armless, eyeless men. Look over the list and be not deceived. Yet in greater plight than these are the shell-shocked, the hopeless demented lads who are homeward bound, back to loved ones whom they will recognize not.

The ship was literally saturated with anaesthetics. On decks A and B our helpless bed-ridden brothers passed the weary hours, some writhing unto death, even, in an unexpected relapse.

Several hundred bodies of sailors who had succumbed to the "flu" were piled high on a lower deck.

The poison gas played its part. Hundreds of men were confined to the open deck that delicate lung-tissues might receive every ounce of oxygen possible.

I listened for hours to the stories of real heroes, men who had actually come face to face with the Hun and had felt the cold steel in the encounter. Such as these were wearing the Distinguished Service Medal.

One lad, a typical American, had had a hard tussle with life at the Front. A man of natural prowess and agility this soldier was selected to crawl up to an advanced position in no man's land under cover of darkness. He went. A combination gas shell exploded nearby and a fragment of shell case ripped away the heel of his foot. In the momentary pain and agony he inhaled the fumes of phosgene gas. Another instant and the mask was adjusted but the poison gas had played its part. Now our hero can neither walk nor breathe with comfort and longevity will be his phantom dream.

Another doughboy, with a D. S. Medal, went over the top somewhere in Belleau Woods. He returned with an ugly facial wound, the cheek-bone blown away and the left eye hanging from its socket. The eye was replaced and the wound healed but the disfigurement was destined to cause great lamentation among his friends and relatives.

And so the story goes. I need not dwell further upon the atrocious results of modern warfare; our war literature is teeming with ghastly and abhorrent narratives.

CHAPTER 57

FOOD JUGGLERS

Eight long days our titanic Leviathan sailed the deep blue sea. The second day out found many boys flat upon their backs in sea-sickness unable to move or speak. One long weary day did I toss in agony, counting every lunge of the boat. Towards evening I decided to "let 'er go." I did, and later out on deck in the fresh air I recovered and was made immune from sea-sickness for the rest of the voyage. With returning health came a vigorous appetite, and two meals per day were not sufficient to appease the appetite.

The natural result was that the men lined up and passed the kitchen unto the fourth and fifth time. System having long since been interred, the ingenious ones ran the blockade of look-outs, struggled into line near the entrance and, with clean mess-tins, passed the cooks unnoticed. Now this condition caused a shortage of food and the men bringing up the rear were decidedly out of luck. The head-cook would open cold reserve rations and serve the remainder of the hungry mob as best he could. Rear was an adept at the game of food jugglery and each meal would be finishing his fourth or fifth helping while our Battery was just beginning.

One evening toward the end of the voyage, while the jugglers played heavy stakes, our mess line moved up to the kitchen in no less than two hours

and a half. We were hungry and half-starved and as we passed the balcony of the mess hall we could see, standing around the mess tables, dozens of men belonging to our Battery who had cheated their way in. On this occasion I allowed myself to express the greatest exasperation I have ever known.

The canteen aboard was sold out and men who possessed food of any description were in clover. Oranges sold for a dollar each.

The return trip was decidedly an unromantic affair. Practically our entire time was spent in the mess line. The saving grace was our home coming. We were prepared for any hardship whatsoever. We were homeward bound and that was sufficient reason for rejoicing.

When we were three days at sea our six months' service terminated and Major Reily authorized one gold chevron to be placed on the left sleeve, three inches above the wrist. A regular sewing-bee was held down in our compartment. Kottinger went into business and charged two-bits per chevron. Later Mathews joined the firm and the two boys did a land office business.

CHAPTER 58

STATUE OF LIBERTY

The Leviathan steamed into territorial waters on the 15th, but on account of a heavy fog we were obliged to anchor outside Sandy Hook until the following morning.

When the 16th finally dawned we were up and packed, ready to leave the ship at a moment's notice; we were ready to step foot upon native soil, and by the light of Jupiter we pledged ourselves never to let the Grand Old Lady do another about face.

Eagerly and patiently we watched the time. "She's moving," came a chorus of bass voices as the old boat struggled to clear a sand-bar. The fog was lifting and the Captain was making ready for a triumphant entry. Everyone was ordered below. At each port-hole were dozens of bobbing heads, all straining to catch a glimpse of land. Someone shouted, "There's the Old Lady!" and we all struggled for a glimpse. Sure enough, it was the Statue of Liberty.

Our field of vision was limited but our mind encompassed the entire Bay—and beyond. We had gained a glimpse, this was sufficient for the moment. The knowledge of arriving safely home was paramount. We could sight-see another day.

Passing thru The Narrows' forty foot channel the Leviathan's keel cleared the bottom by two feet. In the Upper Bay we were met and serenaded by a harbor patrol carrying a full band and several Red Cross girls. Thru our port-hole we could

hear the music. And the girls!—why, they were real American girls such as we had not seen in six months!

Up the Hudson we steamed and later slipped into a dock at Hoboken. Another band on the wharf, playing popular airs, joined in the racket of sirens, whistles, cheering, howling and general serenading.

In the afternoon paper we read: "The most imposing spectacle New York has witnessed since American troops began to arrive here from overseas attended the arrival today of the mighty transport *Leviathan*, formerly the *Vaterland*, with 9,000 officers and men.

"Steaming majestically toward her dock in Hoboken, the great liner was greeted by thousands of spectators who had gathered at Battery Park, along the Jersey shores and in the windows and on roofs of downtown buildings.

"During the ship's course from quarantine to her pier thousands of whistles and sirens joined in the greeting and with the ringing of bells New York was reminded of 'Armistice Day.' "

The monster ship was securely anchored and then in the hour of solemn resolution and heartfelt gratitude we filed out of the trans-Atlantic liner one by one, down the gang-plank and onto the solid foundations of a mighty Republic.

Red Cross girls served coffee and buns, telegrams were dispatched, photographs taken, souvenirs inspected, and a bit later we were tucked away in coaches and on our way to Camp Merrit. It was all over. It seemed a dream.

CHAPTER 59

CAMPS MERRITT AND DIX

Arrived in camp our first act of violence was committed down at the canteen. Each man "killed" a whole American pie and a brick of ice-cream. The French refused to make these eatable "eats," so now, after six months' absence, it remained for us to become thoroly acquainted once more with pie a-la-mode.

Our next excitement was the cootie bath, clothes and all. Under 500 pounds of steam our O. D. suit was prest into a thousand wrinkles and the next day when I invaded New York City on pass my uniform looked like a baked apple and my hob-nailed shoes, ringing upon the pavement, advertised the fact. But for all that I celebrated by sitting in the front row at the Hippodrome, largest show-house on earth. We overseas tramps did the town up generally and returned to camp next morning just in time to line up and march to the next out-going train.

All the way to Camp Dix, near Wrightstown, New Jersey, our all-night crowd, fatigued and weary, closed their eyes to the passing world.

At Dix the boys were destined to spend more gloomy days than they had ever experienced before with the exception of the mud-hole.

At Dix the holiday season came and went. Every day was to be the last. "Tomorrow we move," was the common expression. A few days

before Christmas the boys threatened to "go over the hill." Why should Uncle Sam elect to keep us when were of no earthly use? We stood no formations, mounted no guards. Christmas day arrived, then passed into eternity and with its passing the nefarious red-tape machine turned its wheel for the millionth time. Ten days later, on January 5th, we moved!

In the meanwhile we celebrated the holidays as best we could. Blanky and Jester made trips to New York City in their tailor-mades. "Vic" Ledgerton drove the Red Cross jitney and jollied with the girls. Others went to the Wednesday and Saturday evening dances at Wrightstown. "Herb" Fears borrowed my three dollar russet shoes and made the trip to Philadelphia with Gibson as escort. All others short of "kail" haunted the YMCA free shows.

Have you ever heard an army hoax? Here is one: Upon learning that all company funds in the treasury would automatically revert to the Quartermaster after dissolution of the Battery and that in all likelihood the Battery would be dissolved within the week, Captain Brush proceeded to spend our fifteen hundred dollar mess fund. During the Christmas holidays the kitchen was overstocked with turkey, chicken, fruit, nuts, vegetables, cakes, pies and cigars to the full extent of fifteen hundred dollars. Naturally several distinguished privates, a sergeant or two and the camp dogs gorged to capacity. They believed in the gospel of "aches and pains," arch-enemy of Horace Fletcher and Dr. Tanner.

Within the week our funds were gone and soon the food disappeared. Then to cap the climax we lived on army beans and rice, or the regular allowance of forty cents per man per day, for the next twenty-four days. O! how the memory of turkey, cranberries and cake filled the empty corners of our being.

The weather was bitter, especially at night. Around the big heater the boys gathered every day to discuss the ways of the army. For instance, they could not quite forgive Major Reilly in neglecting to place a requisition for ticks and straw the first night in camp. Several men were in the hospital already and all because of this gross negligence, they argued.

Edgar H. Voigt died at Camp Merritt. "Smiles" we called him and a fine lad, too. His body lies in an earthly sepulchre, but Edgar himself knows no limitation, of this I am certain. It was reported that Tom Sewell, Chester Donley and Roy Bedford also passed away at Camp Merritt, but I have never been able to verify the fact.

And now the Battery began to dissolve. Nathan, Lyon, Kirk, Needham, Parker, Yourstone, Crumrine, Jorgensen and Steger all received discharges at Dix.

Old "Pa-a-arker" made the rounds first and bid all goodbye. The others followed suit and we were tempted to shed a tear or two. These boys whom we had known so intimately for a year and a half were now gone from our lives.

Our equipment was all turned into the Quarter-

master, except blankets and mess tins. The office force worked overtime and all records were okayed finally.

At last, after many days of bitter and lonesome existence, the word was passed around and on January 5th we marched thru Camp Dix in mob formation. Each man carried his little bundle in his own way. There was no regulation—we were no longer a Battery, but were now designated as Second Provisional Company.

It seemed that army officials had decided at last to ship us to the Presidio, San Francisco, to be mustered out. At Dix we had received our final physical examination in view of discharge, but this proved a slip, and in the Red Tape machine at the Presidio we were subjected to another examination of like nature.

CHAPTER 60

CALIFORNIA AND HOME

At the Dix station we boarded Pullmans, that is, they were called Pullmans. At Pittsburg the next morning Colonel Hayden refused to move his troops another inch and demanded that our foul-smelling, broken-down, thirty-five year old cars be replaced by standards. The government was **pay-**ing the Pullman Company for first-class stock and Col. Hayden demanded a square deal.

In France we read in the columns of the New York Herald, European Edition, official accounts wherein Secretary of War Baker promised all returning soldiers the best that Uncle Sam could offer. But it seemed that the Pullman Company's patriotism vanished in its greed for dollars.

In France there was good reason for traveling in box-cars; rolling stock was limited. Not so in the States.

After a lapse of nine hours the Pullman Company finally furnished the cars which Uncle Sam had contracted for and once more we were started on our homeward journey.

Snow was on the ground but in our Standards we were replete in style and comfort—thanks to Col. Hayden. "Scribby," "Big Boy," and I were a trinity of friends in the compartment which we happened to land in the mad scramble for berths.

At Chicago the following day we were booked as second section of number Nine, Santa Fe, leav-

ing at 9:50 a. m. for San Francisco. For the next four days we traveled thru Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and California. Snow covered the ground all the way to Flagstaff. On January 10th we crossed the Colorado River at Needles and now we were once more in California, the land of sunshine.

In the morning when old Sol looked down upon our moving troop train thru a clear-cut atmosphere and the sage brush wafted its nectarine on every breeze I stood in the door of our empty baggage car. While I remained silent gazing out over the low hills, watching the brilliant sun and sage brush dancing in the breeze of the on-rushing train, it was borne home to me as never before that California was home.

Over the Tehachapi and up the San Joaquin valley we traveled and at every station we were met by cheering throngs and Red Cross girls. Faulk met his brother in Barstow; Ingram saw his girl in Fresno; Merwin met some friends in Stockton. "Home Sweet Home" rang within our hearts all day long and the next morning we awoke to the music of the Bay waters. It was Saturday and as the Ferry left its mooring the civilians, crossing to their work, grouped about us and we answered their numerous questions as best we could. At the Ferry in San Francisco a large delegation of Home Boosters showered us with gifts. A crowd quickly gathered to offer us a royal welcome and every soldier displayed an irresistible smile. The sacrifice had been made; now came the reward, the glory and the supreme satis-

faction of knowing that the country's call for men found us soldiers, not slackers. We played the game, and we played it to a finish.

The last days of army life at the Presidio rolled by one by one until finally on January 20th at ten in the morning the boys lined up for the last time to receive the coveted paper—the DISCHARGE.

Once more we gathered in the barracks, but this time as civilians. Sgt. Daniels was just plain Mr. Daniels and we "bucks" had been suddenly elevated to the same position.

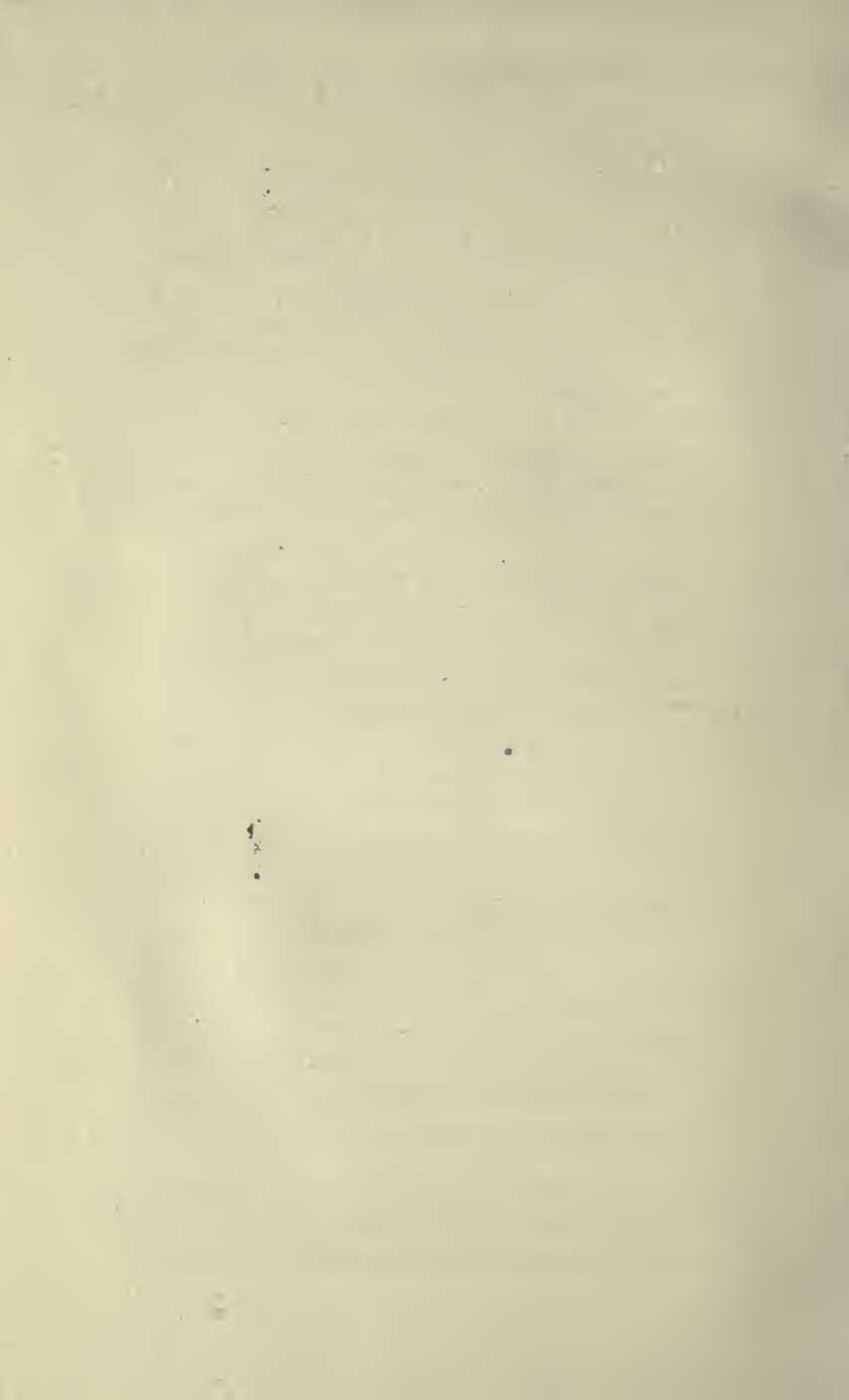
Thru all our joking ran a strain of regret. Under the sacred folds of Old Glory we had marched to war and during our intimate association we had grown into a big family. Now the family was disintegrating and soon we would be scattered to the four winds.

Brighter thots of home coming soothed our otherwise high-pitched emotions and we gathered our few personal effects together, buttoned our coats, and left the Camp.

That evening the Owl's passenger list included some of the happiest men on earth and the next day at Los Angeles we were receivd into loving arms and showered with the tenderest blessings that ever a mother, wife or sweetheart bestowed. There are moments in one's life that can never be erased. The sacred memory of our home coming will live thru life and death—yes, unto eternity.

* * * *

Battery B is now a memory. Thru all the days of my life I shall never forget "The Boys." We were pals in war and now we are pals in PEACE.



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